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ABSTRACT

Several subjects of interest to parents are covered in the collection of six chapters authored by parents of gifted and talented children. In "The Future Belongs to Those Who Prepare for It" by D. McCartney, reasons for paying special attention to the education of the gifted and talented are pointed out. Recounted in a second chapter--entitled "'Pushy Parents' Working for Gifted and Talented" by K. Wood --are a father's practical solutions to many of the problems caused by community opposition to the education of gifted and talented children. Political action in the field of legislation for educational programs is the topic of "How 'Organized Persuasion' Works for the Gifted in Public Education" by C. Nathan. An outline of guidelines for organizing statewide and local groups is presented in the chapter "Are You an 'Only'? Organize for the Gifted and Talented!" by K. Coffey. A final chapter--"Practical Hints for Parents of Gifted Children" by G. Ginsberg--provides a list of 20 suggestions for home life with the gifted child. Appended exhibits include an otuline of the qualities of gifted children in the preschool and elementary school years, a table of mini-courses sponsored by the Gifted Children's Association of San Fernando Valley for children from preschool to senior high school level, a community resource form for parent organization, and a description of suggested permanent committees for parent organization. (SBH)

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PARENTSPEAK
on gifted and talented children

by

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Ventura County Superintendent of Schools Office
Ventura, California
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The six parents who contributed to this book did so amidst all the other activities involved in raising children, making a living, and working for better education of gifted and talented children. The authors made the effort in order to reach a greater audience of parents of gifted and talented children than is usually possible from their home areas in California, Kansas, Louisiana, New Jersey, and Texas. Although the "parent network" is growing, communication is still hampered by such annoyances as copy machines, stamps, lack of office help, and time.

Gratitude is due the parent-authors, the review committee, and various others who have helped in the publication of this handbook.

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Workshops on gifted and talented education have been conducted by her at the National School Board Convention in Houston, The Association for Gifted Regional Conference in New Orleans, and the National Conference on Migrant Education in McAllen, Texas, where her subject was disadvantaged gifted. In addition, Lockhart is doing consulting work for Texas Education Agency and has completed a report for Southwest Educational Development Laboratory for the gifted.

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A certified teacher with a Bachelor of Science in education from the University of Kansas, Wood taught junior high social studies for four years before moving to Manhattan to become circualtion manager of the ***Manhattan Mercury*** in 1973. He is also a member of the board of directors of the Midwest Circulation Management Association.

INTRODUCTION

Parents have always liked to talk about their children, especially to other parents who share their concerns. How true this is with parents of gifted and talented children! Because of the hurdles encountered in furthering their children's education and developing the talents of their children, these parents often yearn for help and direction. To communicate with understanding "veteran" parents, on the subject of gifted education, can be a rewarding experience for the bewildered "rookie" parent.

Parentspeak covers several subjects of top priority with most parents. Each topic is handled by a parent who understands the problems, frustrations, and point of view, from the precarious position of mother or father of an exceptional child.

Reasons for special attention for gifted and talented children are given in the first chapter of the book. Most parents inherently know their gifted child needs special attention, but may have difficulty expressing these feelings to the outside world, which often proves hostile and resentful toward the gifted and talented.

Chapter Two contains examples from a father who has gathered information from his own experiences in a "reluctant" community. He recounts practical solutions to many of the problems caused by "pushy parents" of the gifted and talented.

Parentspeak's next chapter is about political action in the field of legislation for educational programs. The recommendation here is for "organized persuasion." The impassioned protest, attack, or demonstration sometimes attract media coverage, but for real results, this parent-author has found, nothing beats the knowledgeable, well-prepared, factual, and courteous presentation. To help gifted education, one must use facts, figures and plenty of follow through.

A parent's feeling of aloneness, being an "only", is developed in Chapter Four with an appeal to organize with other onlies for action, clout, and results. Publications cited in this chapter are listed with addresses, and prices where available, in the Appendix.

Practical hints for home life with the gifted child are covered in the last chapter by a parent who has worked through various possibilities. The epilogue is an interpretation of the song "Friendly Persuasion," emphasizing commitment to gifted and talented education.

We hope ***Parentspeak*** will prove useful and helpful to parents and, ultimately, to their gifted and talented children. Comments and criticisms would be appreciated.

Barbara Johnson
Publications Editor
N/S-LTI-G/T

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A FOREWORD: To Parents of Gifted and Talented Children From their Gifted and Talented Children

[A composite letter, written by ninth and tenth graders in the M. G. M. (Mentally Gifted Minors) Program, Alhambra, California.]

You love me, and usually understand me, but I wish you realized that being gifted does not make everything easy. I still have a hard time in Math, for example. Think of the position I have been put in since first grade, just because I passed a silly test of describing pictures. Ever since then I am expected to always be straight *A* or on top. You say, "Here, do this, you're supposed to be smart."

I'm glad when you expect only what I am capable of doing. I may excel in certain areas and decline in others. I'm grateful when you don't pressure me but help, guide, and advise me instead. My teachers always push harder because I'm in the gifted program. I'm in harder classes. The teacher grades harder than for regular students, and expects more. During registration I couldn't even get one class because a teacher saw I was in the "directed studies". She thought the class I wanted was too easy. That is the kind of stuff I don't like.

If only you could see the type of things that go on in school and my reactions to them I feel you could understand just what type of an individual I am. Don't get me wrong. You do take a great interest in my school work and "school social life" but your generation is far removed from mine. It's hard for you to understand a typical school day and relate this to me.

I think my world, and what I want to do, is different than yours. I wish you would recognize my wishes and help me. Understand me a little more. For one thing, I like books and reading, but I like to own books, too, like having my favorites for myself so I could read them whenever I wanted to. Why do you say that libraries are good enough?

I see myself as a person, but not as a child. I don't think I have ever really thought of myself as a child. I feel that is one point I would like you to understand. I want to be treated as more of a person. How, I don't really know. But you mustn't expect me to live up to *your* expectations. Well, I wish you would stop pulling the child psychology bit.

I feel that seeing myself as an individual is something I have to do for myself. I can't expect someone else to do it for me. I'm a very confused person right now with mixed-up feelings about different ideas. Some day I'll find myself—soon, I hope—and be able to express myself to others, but I need you, as well as other people, to help me.

I don't like following the crowd and I don't. I try to be myself. But others who are not gifted resent me sometimes for getting better grades or being just a little more perceptive than they are. Some people can't wait to blab to others that I'm a brain, that I'm gifted, that I get *A*'s, or that I'm so smart, much smarter than they are. I dislike this because most people think really intelligent people tend to be weird or very different than they are. This is not so. Everyone has nearly the same emotional feelings whether intelligent or not. We are human, too.

I feel like we have been set off by ourselves like the tigers in the zoo. Nice to look at and talk to but to stay away from—we're different. It's like a stereotype—all Chinese operate laundries or all Jewish own delicatessans. Not true! We are not all geniuses or top-notch intellectuals. We are normal human beings, but we have a "label."

I like it when you encourage me to work on things I enjoy, or build up ideas I've already got. That way I'm able to get my mind starting to decide what I think is right and what I think isn't so good. The only problem is that I'm always asking if I'm doing it "right" instead of deciding for myself.

All in all, I guess what I'm saying is that I feel a need for a more open communication between us. I think sometimes we tend to take each other, and our feelings, for granted without ever really discussing them.

Your hard-working child, who is really trying.

CHAPTER I: REASONS FOR SPECIAL ATTENTION TO EDUCATION FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED

The Future Belongs To Those Who Prepare For It

by DeLois McCartney

> *There is no more searching or difficult problem for a free people than to identify, nurture, and wisely use its own talents. Indeed, on its ability to solve this problem, rests, at least in part, its fate as a free people. . . . . .*
>
> *But a free society nurtures the individual not alone for the contribution he may make to the social effort, but also and primarily for the contribution he may make to his own realization and development.*
>
> **The Rockefeller Report on Education, 1959**

The Bicentennial is more than a commemoration of the 1776 signing of the Declaration of Independence. It is a celebration of the progress America has made since then. We Americans are justly proud of this country. The accomplishments of our people have stimulated a love of country, loyalty, and patriotism in the minds and hearts of the generations of Americans.

Year after year, we prepare for the future with ideas from the past, when suddenly an idea appears which deserves to be called new. And we know that it is new, but only because we also know what has happened before. America today is faced with incredible challenges, different from and more serious than any it has ever met before. How we meet these challenges will be a major factor in determining future progress, and in maintaining our position as a world leader.

Education is the foundation upon which all great nations have been built. The greatest duty Americans can perform for their country is that of guiding its future destiny. This can only be done by preparing the youth of today, through appropriate education, to assume the roles of leadership and responsibility of tomorrow.

Education, as we know it today, would have seemed only a remote possibility to our forefathers. Having met the challenge of quantity education with virtually everyone of school age now in the classroom, we must strive for appropriate education for all by providing differentiated, individualized programming for those with special needs.

Background of Gifted and Talented Education

The recent interest and support for gifted education has been tremendous. Since U.S. Commissioner of Education S.P. Marland Jr., gave his status report

to Congress in 1961, there has been interest and support for this minority group. New federal legislation has been enacted, states have introduced legislation, state and local funding have increased, parents have become involved and committed, and business and industry have offered assistance. The National/State Leadership Training Institute on the Gifted and the Talented has alerted every section of the United States to the need for special programs for special children.

Identification procedures have been outlined, discussed, debated, and questioned as they related to various cultures. Handbooks for teachers, parents and administrators have been written. States have been encouraged and assisted in writing a state plan for their gifted and talented youth. The Association for the Gifted (TAG) has presented seminars at regional and national conferences with numerous educators in the country giving freely of their time and effort. Studies have been made and volumes have been written based on scientific research concerning every facet of gifted-child education.

It would be inappropriate for me to suggest new and different reasons for justification for giving special attention to our gifted and talented youth. This has been discussed by people more knowledgeable than I and with a greater command of words. However, as a parent committed to making a contribution to this movement, there are certain things I consider worth repeating, under the following two headings: the preservation of the individual as a separate entity and the preservation of America as a society and a nation.

Preservation of the Individual as a Separate Entity

Special programming for the gifted and talented youth is consistent with the philosophy of education and a democratic society. Both emphasize the primacy of the individual and make a commitment to the development of full potential. The American ideal of equality of opportunity must not mean sameness of approach nor mediocrity. Parents must not feel that they are asking for special privileges when they ask for specific changes in existing programs, or that new special programs be initiated for their children.

Every child has the right to expect that his school experience be challenging and interesting. Gifted and talented youth are not challenged in the regular classroom. Variability of youth must be accepted. All children can not be treated as if they shared the same capacity for learning. Many schools at all levels, are locked into a traditional and conventional approach geared to the average learner. To the gifted or talented student school becomes lifeless, sterile, futile, perplexing, and meaningless.

When we find a school system with a prescribed curriculum, similar assignments for all students, lecturing as almost the only means of instruction, standard tests by which all students are evaluated, and teacher-chosen grades as the measure of learning, then we can almost guarantee meaningful learning is not available for the able student. There is no challenge and little, if any, interest.

All the blame for this self-defeating system can not be placed on the educators. Many of them do not know any feasible alternatives. Even if they did, funding is given to other priorities. The gifted and talented students can not benefit from the ironclad bonds of conformity. Alternatives can be offered, if special classes are provided or some form of special attention given them.

Feasible alternatives that will motivate and challenge these children into self-initiated learning situations must be substituted for the traditional patterns, if they are to develop a 'love of learning'.

Challenging Educational Problems

Special attention is necessary for gifted and talented youth; research has found that they present challenging educational problems because of their deviation from the norm. Special training is not only desirable but necessary for teachers of this exceptional group, if the results are to be in the best interests of the child and of society. Teachers and administrators who have no special training in working with the gifted child, may not recognize the characteristics, and certainly they will not be able to cope with their learning and developmental needs.

A child brings to school his unlimited curiosity, energy, and uncurbed imagination. What happens? Teachers and schools often stifle the curiosity and limit the imagination through lessons associated with unpleasant or difficult chores, or those concerned with irrelevance or triva. The students are cramming for a test, humoring a teacher, and answering questions that do not come from a child's own need to know.

The same Johnny who can't read was once a child beginning to learn the alphabet and impatient to read a story all by himself. The Jane who today hates poetry used to love nursery rhymes and songs. The high school dropout couldn't wait to be big enough to start school. The dull, apathetic, and bored adult was once an eager child asking questions. Research has found these things can happen to the able student who is not given special attention, who is not provided with a teacher who is trained in dealing with the able child.

Gifted students tell us over and over how they need meaningful feedback from their teachers. Most of them feel quite capable of coping with negative criticism. Their need to be challenged in and out of the classroom is quite strong, but very rarely met. Students are quoted as saying: "Teachers do not like to be challenged. The 'right' method is what counts. If I offer a different way of doing things, it is almost always rejected, without consideration or explanation."

How can we expect a child to develop to his full potential under such conditions? These teachers have not been given special training, do not have enough courage to act as facilitators rather than teachers and are afraid to admit that they do not have all the answers. If gifted and talented students are to be happy and productive they must be given more responsibility for their own learning and more alternatives must be made available to them.

Conformity and Self-Concept

The desire to conform and the feeling of being different are the two jaws of a vise that often grip the gifted and talented youth. Because of the pressures of an inadequate school system with no special attention being given to the gifted and talented students, the exceptionally bright child is likely to try to hide his brightness by pretending to make just as many mistakes as his classmates. He may misbehave just to prove he is one of the "regular guys."

If a gifted child is considered a "brain" by other students or by the teachers, he is subject to enormous pressure. Unless the parents can see what

is developing and can make adjustments at home or through the school administration, emotional problems are likely to occur.

What a person believes about himself is partly a function of his interpretation of how others see him. His self-concept rests in part on what he thinks others think of him. Academic success or failure appears to be as deeply rooted in the concepts of self as it is in measured mental ability.

The assumption that human ability is the most important factor in achievement is questionable. The students' attitudes limit the level of achievement in school and in life. Many researchers believe that the most intelligent persons are those who know themselves best. Self-concept is influenced by the relationship a person has at first with his family and peers in an unstructured situation, and later in a more structured one with his teachers and peers at school.

Parents and teachers should bear in mind that self-concepts are modified by every life experience until the maturing years. The prime goal of school systems should be to develop a strong self-concept, or feeling of respect for the mind and body, and confidence in the student's ability to function effectively. Individuals who feel good about themselves, who are actively involved, who can act effectively with confidence are more at ease socially and more self-assured in whatever they try to do.

A positive approach to students as individuals, and to their differences is teaching in its best sense. The development of all potentials, including positive self-concept, presents a true challenge to today's parents and educators. Such a positive attitude can eliminate the child's need to conform, and encourages individual uniqueness.

Gifted and talented youth should be taught to solve problems creatively through the generation of ideas, and to use their imagination. Students should be made to feel that they are creators rather than just learners.

Creative thinking is needed to resolve the problems of living both now and in the future. The problems our gifted and talented youth face today are real problems in living as they struggle toward development of greater insights, in and out of school. They must develop problem-solving skills: the ability to project several ideas, apply them in given situations, and evaluate the results as they apply to their individual lives, and to society as a whole.

Given special attention and encouragement, these students will realize that their ideas are recognized, that they are no longer limited to predetermined answers or procedures and, as a result, they will assume more responsibility and generate more ideas. This establishes a cycle of creativity and self-direction which will directly affect the preservation of the individual, and ultimately the country.

Gifted and talented youth should be provided with a scholarly education within a humane environment. Schools must not ignore the need for positive social interactions. In her book, ***Left-Handed Teaching***, Gloria Castillo reminds us that learning is most effective when the feelings of the participants are recognized, accepted, and permitted to become an active part of the learning process.

Most of the schools have, for reasons quite obvious to all of us, focused most—if not all—of their time and attention on cognitive skills. We know this is important, but is it enough for our gifted and talented students? Many

leading educators, as well as parents, do not think so. We believe there is a need to supplement the cognitive skills with the affective dimensions of the child—his interests, concerns, fears, anxieties, joys and any other personal feelings and reactions—for a good learning environment. Confluent education is desirable for all children, but an absolute necessity for the above-average student in order to develop the "whole child." For the gifted and talented the blending of cognitive and affective strategies allows for emotional, physical, and intellectual learning and frees him from the facade of the traditional "good student" image.

Preservation of America as a Society and a Nation

Identification, development, and use of our most productive resources are a matter of survival, in an era of ever-increasing crises and challenges. The future of our country and our way of life depends upon the values, creative thinking ability, and problem-solving skills developed in the gifted and talented youth of America.

The need for leadership is obvious. Never before in the history of our country has there been a greater need for independent thinkers, people of vision, those who can maintain this country's position as a world leader.

American was founded on a belief in individual freedom. And yet, have we provided the climate for freedom to learn—freedom to choose from many and various alternatives, as well as encouragement to develop an "inner freedom" so essential to the development of the whole person?

Viktor Frankl described inner freedom when he related his experiences in a concentration camp. He tells us that he finally realized, after years in the camp, that everything (possessions, status, identity) can be taken from a man, except one thing, and that is the last of "human freedoms"—freedom to choose one's own attitude on any given set of circumstances. This inner freedom makes us responsible for thinking our own thoughts, becoming a unique person, and being the person we choose to be. We may have hundreds of alternatives to choose from, depending upon our situation, or we may have none, but this inner freedom exists regardless.

In his book, ***Freedom to Learn***, Carl R. Rogers tells us there is scientific evidence of the necessity for this sense of freedom. A study showed that while nearly everyone yielded in some degree to group pressure, there were sharp individual differences, and these we found to be definitely correlated with personality characteristics. For example, the individuals who tended to yield, agree, or conform, the ones who could be controlled, gave general evidence of incapacity to cope effectively with stress.

The non-conformists did not tend to panic when placed under pressure of conflicting forces. The study further showed that the conformists had feelings of personal inferiority and inadequacy, while the person who did not yield to pressure had a sense of competence and personal adequacy. He or she was more self-contained and autonomous in thinking and was a better judge of the attitudes of other people. Therefore the person who is free within himself, who is open to his experience, who has a sense of his own freedom and responsible choice, is less likely to be controlled by his environment than the person lacking in these qualities. If we hope to produce men and women who will be able to make a re-commitment to the basic values upon which America was

built, then we must use this "inner freedom" idea as a springboard into the third century of our nation's existence.

The 1974 "Report to Congress on Education of the Gifted and Talented" indicated that programs for the gifted will produce *motivation and productivity* in adult life if properly implemented, increasing the taxable income of the most capable segment of the population. The productivity of a well-adjusted, gifted or talented adult would be beneficial in many ways. One outstanding benefit would be the monetary gains to the treasury as gifted adults make their economic contributions to the economy.

The use of tax money by the government to finance educational programs represents more than just simple spending; it represents an investment. This is particularly true when we allocate our tax money for the education of the gifted. Good educational programs for the gifted and talented youth will yield both human and economic dividends.

Ours is a world that we did not make but one which we can yet shape, if we are sincere in our efforts to give special attention to the youth with capacities to lead us. These young people can discover cures for mental and physical illnesses, find ways to feed the hungry, solve the energy crisis and keep America a free, world leader for the next two hundred years.

Society must accept the responsibility for looking beyond tradition for tomorrow's education. We must accept the responsibility for facilitating the continual growth of our most able children.

Despite the gravity of the nation's social and economic problems today, when put into their proper perspective they will be solved. As in the past when we have been faced with a crisis, America will emerge at the end a stronger and more vibrant country—with a citizenry more concerned than ever.

As we study our past, we are confronted with a simple but extremely important message. It is that, we the people, parents, and educators must respond as did our forefathers when problems arose, with dedication, enthusiasm, and determination. We must continue in our efforts to give special attention to those children and youth who have the potential for greatness, realizing that the future belongs to those who prepare for it.

CHAPTER II: COMMUNITY OPPOSITION TO EDUCATION OF GIFTED AND TALTENTED

"Pushy Parents" Working for Gifted and Talented in the Reluctant Community

by Keith Wood

A cause may be inconvenient, but it's magnificent. It's like champagne or high shoes, and one must be prepared to suffer for it.

Arnold Bennett

The potential gains to society from our gifted and talented children, in a time when crisis is the common word, are too great to be only half attained. If America is to receive the full future value from these children, she must give them special attention.

"There is nothing so unequal as the equal treatment of unequals." [1]* Our country has acted upon that reasoning in programs for children with mental and physical limitations. Now on the obverse, the cause of the gifted and talented is certainly a worthy banner to follow in efforts of individually appropriate education for all children.

"Gifted and talented are not better, they are different!" [2] With this statement Elizabeth Paul of Minnetonka, Minnesota, introduced the subject of successful community programs for gifted and talented at a parent workshop on gifted education. Many communities react negatively to educational programs for gifted and talented children, said Paul, a parent. The programs are labeled elitist, discriminatory, threatening to teachers, morally irresponsible or a thousand other bugaboos. She pointed out that gifted children have their own special problems which deserve attention.

For parents of the gifted and the talented, the admission that their children are not ***better*** but ***different***, is a clue to successful action in a reluctant community. The basic thought in this concept can be the guidepost for all activities.

As in a good mathematical theorem certain givens exist. For this discourse we will assume that you, the parents, have made the commitment to gifted and talented. With a few others of similar intent, you approach your community and schools declaring, "Gifted and talented shall be served. When can we begin?" In the reluctant community the response is akin to walking into the side of an iceberg: hard, cold, and of overwhelming magnitude.

The glory of the spirit of all great educators be upon the community that says, "Let's get started today."

Examination of Nature of Opposition

In the real world of the reluctant community, examination of the nature of your opposition is paramount. Ninetheenth century advice to advocates was:

* Numbered References on Page 45.

"Thrice is he armed that had his quarrel just. But four times he who gets his blow in fust." [3] So, too, must parents of gifted and talented react.

When opposition is encountered, you must not only be certain of the justification of your cause, but knowledgeable enough about the opposition to be able to counter its arguments before they are raised. "Knowledge: A little light dispels much darkness." [4]

The darkness of community opposition can be expelled by diligent research and constant dissemination of the facts learned. The community may need intensive education to overcome its hesitancy. Community reluctance can probably be categorized into three common strains.

One is difficult to verbalize, yet it is very real. It is a conflict of "haves" versus "have-nots"; it is an image of intelligent children coming from only affluent homes, and programs existing only in schools in wealthy neighborhoods; it is a fear that children selected for the program will be stigmatized; it is a fear of eggheads. In all these fears, one thought comes through: a community is afraid of any program that can be construed as conferring privilege. Or, even more basically: one person getting something more than the other fellow has.

Answers to Some Arguments

This egalitarian quest is voiced by two groups, not necessarily overlapping in composition. One group may feel that their school is sub-par educationally, or economically, or ethnically. This may indicate an inferiority complex. The other group may be well educated and intelligent but feel their children might not qualify for the program.

When presented with this type of fear in the reluctant community, consider the reverse. It is not difficult to admit that some children in our schools, not our own, of course, might need Title I reading assistance. By applying this reverse situation argument, that some children need gifted programs, we can imply that the argument against privilege is without merit. Needy children should be served.

The Commissioner of Education's Report [5] does a fine job of handling similar arguments. Keep a copy handy and adapt its message to your community. Most of all, stress the fact that intelligence knows no ethnic, economic or social barriers. All groups have children who are potential members of gifted programs, and all schools should benefit.

Tiptoe gently through these arguments, for a mistep here opens the movement to charges of "elitism". We live in an age when elite movements are in the same public category with the seven deadly sins. Yet, we strive so often to find the elite in our society. We want the very best in politics, sports, and endowed chairs at universities. Still, elitism is an epithet in the reluctant community.

The fear of racial and ethnic discrimination will quickly raise its head in a reluctant community. Gifted programs have been under fire in many areas because white middle class children have been the dominant participants. The standardized tests used for so long are seen as particularly favorable to this same category of children. Minority spokesmen will be concerned about the impact of gifted programs on their segment of the community. Encourage their participation, and gain from their valuable insight.

More than ever America is aware of the waste of her natural resources. Gifted children are one of our greatest resources. We cannot afford the loss of any child. Regardless of your ethnic standard, vocally shoulder a part of the load to guarantee that programs in your community reflect the value of all children. The field of minority testing patterns and research is rapidly expanding. Document both the adaptability of the programs for all children, and the reality of selection systems that can identify the gifted and talented in the diverse community in which you live. Careful attention to this area is fundamental. Not only will hypocritical lip service torpedo your program in the community, but Uncle Sam is also watching, and many schools will sink without federal dollars.

Is not the expenditure of money for programs for children who already have advantages against the grain of the American idea of equal education for all? With the national publicity given to several court cases in this area, this argument may well surface in your community. Keep yourself carefully informed so that programs you encourage do not run afoul of the courts.

If we truly believe in the concept of individualized education, then we should educate the child according to his needs, rather than assuming that each child in a heterogeneous classroom will be adequately educated. From sports to Title I reading to Headstart, we already grant almost every possible assistance with federal aid to every possible category, save one: gifted and talented, who have their own needs. If they are to be truly equally educated, let us give them their fair share in our communities.

Special programs do cost money while many schools still need basic improvements. Taxpayers will surely ask if the cost is justified. "You better believe it!" is my stock retort. What, I ask my inquisitor, is the cost of educating another Salk, Pasteur, Roosevelt, Carver, and others like them, who with intelligence and pluck have made such valuable contributions to our society? More importantly, how much have we already lost when children with similar intelligence were discouraged, turned off, or cast off by a public education which did not meet their educational needs?

When as many as seventeen percent of gifted children are school dropouts [6], it is very clear that the schools are failing these children. Can we afford not to pay the cost? For the dollar-conscious you can cite examples of inexpensive gifted and talented programs like the mentor programs, inservice training for classroom teachers, and the use of consulting teachers. Regardless of the price tag, education of these children does not cost, it pays.

As previously stated, the dropout load implies that schools fail children. This must not be construed as a blanket criticism of school and teachers. To allow that charge to stand only brings teacher opposition, which must be handled skillfully. However, the statistics do reaffirm our contention that the classroom teacher already has a full load, teaching to the great average, while the voracious mind of the gifted child, unchallenged and unstimulated by the average, fades away. Our argument is that intelligence, like a strong arm, atrophies with disuse and some teachers should be trained to teach gifted children.

A functional understanding of the opposition that may be encountered in the reluctant community develops only with experience and intense discussion and analysis by your core group. I hope the ideas suggested here are

of assistance in visualizing the nature of your opposition, should it develop. If it does, the responses discussed may need to be adapted to your community, but consider this thought: like the flies and honey proverb, you will accomplish more with common horse-sense and research than with emotional responses.

Three Faces of a Reluctant Community

The reluctant community has three faces. One is the opposition of the parents themselves. Administration of the schools can be a significant second roadblock, as well as its close partner, the school board. Most significant of all, the greatest hindrance is the reluctant teaching staff. Without the support and cooperation of the teachers, the third face of the reluctant community, no program will ever succeed.

Before considering these three, a correlative philosophical note is appropriate. There are two ways to approach new ideas. One is to rationalize, to deny the existence of the need, or to deny the need for change. The other is to examine the rationale of the new idea, and then implement the most logical solution. We can acknowledge that square pegs do not fit into round holes, or we can find real ways to reshape the pegs. The role of the committed parent must be to define the rationalization, explain the rationale that justifies our cause, and then proceed to reshape the pegs.

Teacher opposition may sound unusual. However, an element of conservatism seems to exist which resists the adoption of new programs, new duties, responsibilities, and the like, as encroachments upon the individual teacher. Such thought, thankfully, is not universal.

Faculty reluctance may be a fear that the demands for gifted and talented programs are really criticism of the teachers themselves—that teachers are not "doing their jobs". Other teachers may feel a threat to their individual control of the content of the classroom by meddling "pushy" parents who are not professionally trained. Both these arguments represent a fear of exposure. Yet, while parents can usually name a teacher or two who may not stand up to scrutiny, the recognized need for gifted and talented programs is simply a realization that most teachers are not trained in the educational psychology of gifted children. They have not learned the educational processes, particularly of affective education, by which gifted and talented children benefit most.

Teachers are often overworked and underpaid. In an era when mainstreaming is a common thought in special education, teachers are being asked to be all things to all children. We do all exceptional children an injustice to expect this of classroom teachers. We should not ask that they do more, but rather that they should have improved training. They should be provided adequate assistance to handle a complex classroom assignment.

When we as parents ask for gifted programs, we do not expect to tell the professional how it shall be done. We expect, as parents, taxpayers, and voters, to set the priorities in general public policy, and we expect to exercise our role as evaluators of the schools. The professional is obligated by his employment and by his philosophical commitment to education to implement the best possible administration of that policy. When advocating this position in a reluctant community, parents should stress, with solidly optimistic enthusiasm, the ***partnership*** aspect of such an approach.

Another point, not necessarily to be expounded by parents, concerns a lack of knowledge. Teachers who know little about giftedness often assume individualized instruction meets the need. They may not understand why parents want programs, and what such programs entrail. The U. S. Commissioner of Education's Report to the Congress in 1972[7] on gifted and talented noted that teachers unexposed to the concept of gifted and talented programs are generally hostile. Opportunities for experience in inservice training produce changes to more favorable attitudes.

The lack of knowledge is also a crutch for administrative opposition. Parents who can cite numbers, costs, models, and teacher training modules can assist administrators to overcome this proverbial molehill. Remember though, that this information must be judiciously infused to avoid an overt exposure of administrative ignorance. Exposure creates embarrassment and embarrassment creates undying animosity. While educating your opponents, do not forget to stroke egos when it can be done effectively and unobtrusively.

Another form of administrative hesitancy can be expressed as a cost factor, the lack of qualified personnel (which is an admission of inadequate training of regular classroom teachers and a valuable weapon), and perhaps even the lack of educational justification. All three factors are closely related. Educational justification for programs and their benefits is rampant in research literature. Do your own survey of the literature on gifted education and use the information generously as you defend the need for gifted and talented programming. Cite the kinds of programs that can be run for little or no cost. Be informed on in-service, university extension, and other programs for teacher development.

Another roadblock is that the good administrators will rightly shy away if they see gifted and talented programming becomming an issue in local politics. Parents should avoid any forum that would make the children themselves a political issue. Instead, political decision makers should be the focal point of the positive pressure of committed "pushy" parents. School boards and the administrators they hire, should sense that refusal to adopt gifted and talented programming may be hazardous to a reelection bid. Remember, while you may not have overwhelming numbers, your vocal opposition may generate enough interest to topple the power structure.

A more common possibility for administrative opposition is related to teacher control of the classroom. In most districts, the principals have direct line authority in their buildings, and over the educational activities therein. The addition of special teachers, outside the school's normal range of curriculum, is often seen as a threat that undermines this supervisory authority. Because programs are needed does not mean the supervisors are at fault. On the contrary, parents ask for programs because they do not see existing school policies concerning individualized education as fully implemented for all children, especially the gifted.

Parents should stress that educational programs for the gifted and talented are often simple extensions of existing policies and goals for the general education of all children. We cannot expect existing policies and practices directed at the general population to serve the needs of exceptional children.

The fact that children possess superior intellect, or creative talents, does not imply that they are positively motivated, emotionally capable, socially well-adjusted, or favorably accepted by their families and teachers. These children

are different, and a program must acknowledge this, if it is to meet the children's needs as individuals. To this end, the long range goals of gifted and talented programming must be aimed. If we affect the entire system by "osmosis" as a beneficial by-product, we have gained so much more.

Encourage administrators to help develop appropriate programs to fulfill these goals in their own buildings. If these people are challenged to be in the vanguard, they will be supportive of all your efforts. If threatened, they will be defensive. Your choice is obvious.

Some Practical Lessons in Organization

Most suggestions for parent organizations concern communities where gifted programs exist or implementation is pending. The reluctant community needs to create a favorable climate first. The parent-teacher-citizen organization when faced with reluctance, should generate educational political pressure, creating a climate in which programs for gifted and talented will be more than tolerated. Honest acceptance must be the goal. As such the following may suggest some practical lessons in organization. (Others are contained in Chapter IV.)

- The first step is visibility. Organize. Follow any guideline you wish, but get a name that tells who you are and what you are about, a structure, officers, and a reason to exist. Make them all public. Educating the public is not achieved over coffee in someone's living room. File for a nonprofit status so that your dollars of support are tax deductible for the donor.

Determine purposes and goals, and analyze the nature of your opposition. Develop a board of directors of committed individuals of diverse backgrounds. Avoid creating a group that is fronted only by a few prominent figures.

Once formed, your directorship should thoroughly discuss the goals and philosophy appropriate for your community, and ways to carry those thoughts to the community. Develop a public image. Go to all meetings concerning education, looking like the representatives of something important. You are! Be business-like, confident, self-assured.

Institute a speakers' bureau. Select the most articulate members of your group to represent you. Assist them in developing responses to questions that carry the philosophy of the group. Avoid argumentation and defensive stands. Be consistent in presentation to all groups. Notify local organization program chairpersons of your willingness to talk without any fee.

In your speech present an overview of what gifted and talented means, why programs are needed, and what can be accomplished. If questions are raised, handle them head on, with tact, but be willing to gently expose loaded questions for what they are. Be on the offensive without ***being*** offensive.

Recruit a publicity chairperson. On the other hand, avoid the term "publicity"! Your publicist should have ties to the local media, submitting news releases without the look of a high school club report.

Enlist a battery of letter-to-the-editor writers. When those nasty little digs appear in the letters column, as they surely will, a single, carefully worded logical and articulate response is quite powerful. Avoid sarcasm and ridicule in this war of words foisted upon the reading public by the opposition writer. Your judgment will tell you when some harangues sould not be dignified by an answer. Incidently, letters to the editor should not be in your offensive

weapons' arsenal. Leave the contrived cliche of a letter to the editor to the other side. The public will see it for what it is.

A second element of organization is to build a power base. If the community is reluctant, influence, not numbers, is all important. Be an intense lobbyist for support among the community leadership. Bend any available ear. Is your school board a group that simply rubber stamps administrative decisions, or are some members of the "step to a different drummer" type? If the different drummer types are consistently in favor of a better education, quietly cultivate them.

Board members like to be "in the know". As you form your organization, contact all of the school board members individually. Split up the assignments. Never allow the board members to be the last to know or their embarrassment may mean unexpected future opposition. A majority of the board in your camp means half the battle is won.

Any community organization is a potential source of support. Sell the various community leaders on your cause. Start with the few that make a difference, and the sheep will follow. While that may sound shallow, the shrewd lobbyist will find such knowledge of human nature to be a significant ally.

Another source of support is the group of parents with a vested interest. Sympathetic teachers can readily identify children who are potential program participants and their parents can be contacted. Parents of gifted children, afraid of charges of special privilege and elitism, often shy away from acknowledging their children's gifts. Parents should no longer be embarrassed about the limitations or capabilities of their children. In the field of retardation, greater progress has been made with parents generally no longer facing a social stigma for having a retarded child. Your organization can work on the premise that parents should not be hesitant to admit that they have a gifted child. When parents clear that hurdle, understanding what can be accomplished for their children, they too should support public school programs for gifted and talented.

As an image and a power base develop, your organization will begin to have an effect upon the gifted and talented children in the community. Image is important, but actions influence that image, too. Use caution, that the two do not become contradictory. You should project an image that is business-like, well-informed, and confident in your cause. If the activities you undertake do not convey the same tone, you can undermine your own efforts. Remember, every four years political parties spend millions on image, but their actions often spell out their defeat.

What an Organization Can Do

Now, what to do? Offer your volunteer services to the school system. Carefully select your entry point with a sympathetic teacher. Volunteer with ideas in hand, in a way that will help improve the environment for gifted children. Do not be overly ambitious, as it is more important to succeed the first time on a small scale than to make a splashy entrance that is a phenomenal flop. The negative results will only produce a chorus of "I told you so!"

Volunteer to start a mentor-type program and to coordinate it. Another avenue is to coordinate a community resources study for use in the schools. The only cost for either is your time.

Do research on good classroom ideas for gifted and talented, on education literature aimed at teachers, on the advantages of gifted and talented programming, and on the types of programs you think might work in your community. Involve the teachers in developing these ideas, if possible, and provide this information to the schools in enough copies to supply each building. An outstanding source of material is any nearby university library, or try your own state department of education coordinator for gifted, if such a position exists. Publish a newsletter, mailed to all you might think interested and to all teachers, detailing the good things about school personnel and activities that benefit gifted and talented. Such positive reinforcement illustrates the value of gifted to a wide range of possible support, and it tends to negate the rumor mill.

Attend school board meetings regularly. If you want to "own" an organization like the board, get involved with it and be at every meeting. Consider the possibility of entering a sympathetic candidate at election time. Be prepared to discuss any issue, from employment of new teachers to building proposals and budgets. Know the needs of gifted and talented in your community and promote them.

Be willing to serve on parent-teacher study and research committees. Consider this approach as a way to begin in your community. Used as a way to sidetrack the "vested interest—privilege—elitism" argument, this approach introduces offically a wide representation of the community into consideration of programs. Ensure that the study committee has real potential with specific charges and responsibilities.

Encourage area university and college schools of education to offer night courses, summer school classes, extension courses, and regular graduate programs to current and prospective teachers of gifted, and to regular classroom teachers. Help to advertise the availability of these programs. If you have the resources, finance a scholarship or two, paying tuition for a local teacher.

Encourage the administration to include programs on giftedness during inservice days. Help plan them if you can, providing materials, lists of available speakers, even finances if there is a need. If your system does not have inservice training per se, create your own programs, and invite teachers in small groups to attend on their own time. Those who attend will appreciate take-home materials.

Seek out the availability of funds for research, pilot programs, and other worthwhile projects, and assist in getting these awarded in your district. If you have funds, finance student research or participation in a summer project. Encourage teachers to apply for mini-grants for experimentation. Sponsor a mini-grant if possible. Offer your volunteer help in making teaching aids for a project, thus stretching dollars. American education is money oriented. Use that orientation to develop sympathetic support.

Most of all, find ways to help children. That is the central point of parent involvement in the education of gifted and talented. If parents in a reluctant community set out to assist these children, they must also mount a massive lobbying effort targeted at the whole community. In a reluctant community, the only assistance for gifted and talented children may be that provided by a small parent's organization.

A word of caution. Too often private schools evolve as a cure for the inadequacy of the public schools. In giftedness, this solution openly invites charges of elitism and privilege. The better solution is still in improving the school system itself. In the meantime, find ways to help the children directly.

As you face adversity, try to remember the following note:

> ***"Whinever I read in a sermon," said Mr. Dooley, "that th' wurruld is goin' to pot, that th' foundations iv government is threatened, that th' whole fabric iv civilised s'ciety is in danger, that humanity is on th' down grade, and morality is blink', that men 're becomin' dhrunkards, an' women gamblers, an' that th' future iv the race is destruction. I can always console mesilf with wan thought."***
>
> ***"What's that?" asked Mr. Hennessey.***
>
> ***"It ain't so," said Mr. Dooley.*** [8]

If the doom-sayers are to continue to be wrong, then gifted and talented children must become a significant part of Mr. Dooley's "It ain't so." That reward alone should be enough to renew your vigor to fight for gifted and talented programs in the reluctant community.

CHAPTER III: CONSTRUCTIVE WAYS TO WORK WITH THE ESTABLISHMENT

How "Organized Persuasion" Works for the Gifted in Public Education

by Carol Nathan

> *A protest, even the most violent protest, becomes legitimated when and only when the affirmations on which it is based are in fact (not just in personal conviction) supported by good reasons, good reasons shared or potentially sharable by the community that is relevant.*
>
> Wayne C. Booth, Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Assent

When parents with gifted children consider the ways in which they can have an impact on improving educational institutions, they find several approaches that have been used with varying degrees of success over the past few decades. The traditional means developed by parent-teacher associations come first to mind. In the late sixties another mode became fashionable: the hastily organized emotional protest of a crowd of parents united soley by their anger over some local development. An even more recent way of being involved is the parent advisory committee established and controlled by the administration of special programs. Whatever value these methods have in special cases, none has provided the parents of the gifted with a consistently effective means for moving schools and staff toward improved programs for the gifted.

While in some instances parents of the gifted have worked effectively through Parent-Teacher Association committees, their actions are inevitably curtailed by the restrictions of the organization's constitution. No parent-teacher association can favor a particular group of students over the school population as a whole. The adversary stance of emotional protest, because it is based upon the action of a group drawn together by a particular, often momentary crisis, does not provide effective means for establishing a stable and continuing relation with district staff or school board. Finally, the advisory committee, because its parent members are fed only information deemed necessary by the administrators, has also proved ineffective. Only partially informed and made passive by their limited role, parents on these committees find little opportunity to effect improvements in programs.

So it is necessary that parents of gifted students seek alternatives. One such option is what might be called "organized persuasion." This concept does not exclude any of the useful elements of the three other kinds of parent participation when and if they prove useful. Indeed, organized persuasion can be seen as containing these other possibilities because it is based on an inclusive and flexible notion of effective action. It can perhaps be best defined as

attempting to establish unassailable reasons for or against a course of conduct.

Organized persuasion becomes possible when a large part of a community working for the gifted reaches a consensus regarding important issues. But consensus is not enough. It gets its force and direction from organization. In this instance, the organization is empowered to represent the interests of the gifted, with a substantial constituency of parents willing to participate actively in pursuing its goals. At the same time it provides an organization with the ability to move beyond the first step, which is too frequently merely a resolution of tensions rather than a prescription for action.

Organization thus becomes consensus institutionalized. It is this organizing of opinion which enables parents to be an enduring force in a community. Further, an organization established upon such a basis derives a justification from the consensus. A coherent body of parents which supports arguments that are persuasive carries more weight than isolated individuals. It presents a business-like face that authorities must take seriously, whether the intention is to move a district to action or to influence legislators to legalize the concept of gifted education within the boundaries of public education. If it sometimes takes effort to identify sympathetic supporters in the public sector, at least when they are located, the organization is there, established and ready to present them with substantial convincing proposals. Proposals, clearly thought-out and offered in convincing form, enable lawmakers to see ways toward possible legislation and provide educators with a view of improving their present offerings to include gifted students.

The Way to Consensus

But how is consensus reached? Anyone at all familiar with parents of gifted children is aware that he is in the presence of a variety of strong independent opinions. Before any constructive action for gifted students can be undertaken, it is necessary for parents to relinquish several all-too-common stances and start to consider the major issue: "how do we get a program going?"

If the answer to that question is to be found in consensus, then parents have to resist the temptation to gather together merely for the purpose of exchanging "horror stories," which are really only camouflage for a reluctance to become actively involved. Parents must also forego the desire to rise up in righteous unexamined indignation to fling strident accusations of incompetence at the system. Attacking an administrator or teacher may somewhat relieve personal frustration, but it usually turns out to be simply another way of avoiding constructive participation in solving problems.

Finally, there are those parents who insist they don't want their children singled out for special attention but complain, both in public and in private, that the schools are wholly failing to educate their children. If what they say is really true, why aren't they applying themselves to remedying such a deplorable situation? Such petulance does often produce results—negative results. It can infect their children with contempt for teachers and for learning generally. Ironically, their attitudes can have precisely the reverse effect of what the parents intend; discontented and contemptuous children are a problem in a classroom. The result is that these children ***are*** singled out for special attention. The only difference is that the singling out has nothing to do with learning.

"Horror story" telling obviously goes nowhere, since it isn't directed outside the story circle. Vituperation and complaint, if they become aggravating enough, do arouse school boards and administrations to one of two kinds of response, both of which seek to quiet the rage, but rarely address the problems that generate the rage. Placebos are prescribed in the form of "special" field trips or "fun and games" frills. The intention here is to remove the children from the classroom so that the business of learning and teaching can continue. The other response, which is not necessarily exclusive of the first, is a hardening of the status quo opinion that gifted children are frequently figments of neurotic parents' fantasies, or if they are gifted, "they will make it anyhow."

Recrimination and complaint may make individual parents feel good, and "horror stories" may make a group of parents feel good. Neither takes just grievances anywhere important. For that, such attitudes have to be dismissed in favor of thinking through what a good gifted program should be and what can be done to insure that such a program has a chance of thriving in a particular setting.

What must finally take place is a coming together of parents dedicated to developing a serious strategy that speaks reasonably and persuasively to the apathy or hostility of both educators and legislators.

Take a Look at the Options

Options necessarily are various, depending on what the state and/or the individual school district has available for gifted students. In some instances, nothing may be available; then a group must decide where it can best direct its attention. Whether it be the state legislature, the county board of trustees, the local school district, or some independent undertaking such as a lyceum, a campaign strategy must be developed so that the emphasis or organized persuasion directs its arguments to the right audience.

If a group agrees that some kind of statewide legal and financial commitment is needed before anything else, then the group must be prepared to work with state legislators. This strategy requires that a number of local groups work together. Arguments should stress that the needs of gifted students are a legitimate part of the total responsibility of the state to educate all students according to their abilities. The proper education for the gifted is the most economical way a state can assure a pool of citizens competent to become future leaders.

Presenting these arguments means traveling to the state capitol, engaging the interest and support of key legislators, particularly members of education and finance committees. In the beginning, arguments are usually presented in conversation and small group exchange. More formal presentations should wait for an appropriate setting. While it is necessary to contact members of key committees, it is also wise to seek out the state representatives of the local areas of the groups participating. What do they think about education generally and education for the gifted particularly? Most people in government have strong opinions on the subject of education. The object is to influence opinion in the direction one wants it to go, or better yet speak to such opinion in effective arguments.

When the county is the target of organized persuasion, a group representing a number of districts is the most persuasive. The county approach is particularly

effective in rural or sparsely-populated areas where centralizing both direction and funding of a gifted program results in better offerings. Gifted students profit from the good will which results from the sharing of the burden of funding and providing materials for gifted courses. The board of trustees, the county superintendent, and any special education departments can be avenues for exploration. If such effort results in a mobile gifted resource center to serve teachers, parents, and students on a rotating basis, possibilities for developing gifted programs are more apt to occur.

Usually, however, a group decides to put its effort on the local level. This is understandable, since it is our own children about whom we are most immediately concerned. Further, success in one district can often stimulate activity in another. Gradually the scope of parent involvement can grow to include county and state.

In a district with no gifted offerings, there is, however, a special problem. What can be found on which to build a gifted program? Without the help of a framework established by either district or state for gifted education, parents of the gifted must turn their efforts to influencing general curriculum decisions. Exploring this possibility in a constructive manner, they can assist in developing a nucleus of offerings open enough to allow the gifted student to stretch without demanding that any teacher establish two mutually exclusive curricula. When such areas of curriculum, preferably in core academic courses, have been identified, parents are likely then to find both teachers and administrators who are amenable to change. If professionals are met with good will and cooperation, they will respond in kind. There are few good educators today who do not welcome any help they can get in improving what schools can do for all students.

If none of these options for working through public institutions seems to be available, a group may decide that it has to begin outside public education. Parents tend to feel—and I think rightly—that this course is an admission of defeat not just for themselves, but for public education itself. And if a group does not establish goals that move it beyond this first hurdle, then the defeat must be laid in large measure, at the feet of parents themselves.

Influencing Public School Responsibility

Organized persuasion—whatever option is selected—is directed toward influencing public schools to assume their responsibility toward gifted students. If this option is elected in preference to any of the others, it can have only one intention: to increase the visibility of the gifted in the eyes of educators and lawmakers. This has been done with some success in a number of cases through a liaison of community people and educators concerned with the fate of gifted students. Saturday classes and summer programs designed for gifted children and offered through a continuing education program at a community college are a frequent practice. In other instances, a lyceum organized by parents is developed, involving interested members of a community—doctors, lawyers, artists, business people, and even concerned educators, to name a few. While neither of the programs is necessarily academic, both offer something beyond average curriculum.

Tuition is a necessary element in either of these programs. In the first, a charge per class is established; in the second, admission to the program is

usually on a membership basis, with dues absorbing the expenses. In both cases, costs for books and materials are assumed by the participating students.

How do these programs raise the visibility of gifted children? The enthusiasm of both students and those who on a voluntary basis teach such classes, communicates itself to the whole community. Such opportunities also generate questions about a school system that fails to provide equally challenging activities. Achievements of students are shared with the public through displays, art shows, demonstrations, and performances, for example. The accomplishments of young people always delight, and often amaze, adults and raise more questions about the inadequacy of the educational system.

These parent-generated programs should probably be viewed as short-term activities always directed to the long-range goal: to persuade a district to meet the needs of the gifted students in its jurisdiction. By presenting a variety of teaching styles and curricula, the parent group suggests thoughtful and exciting alternatives to the narrow range of a standard curriculum. As long as public education is a given of our democracy, parents must not settle for a minimal effort on the part of any school system. But care must be taken that these programs are not viewed by the schools as relieving them of their responsibility to the gifted. If this happens, the very intention of such an undertaking is defeated.

I must add that I see parent-generated programs as a last resort. All gifted students deserve an education appropriate to their abilities. The restrictions which private classes must of necessity set up tend to exclude from participation children whose parents cannot afford the tuition. Some of these parents may be spurred to active participation in the organization if its goals are made available to them as parents of students who should qualify. But the climate of exclusiveness often does more harm than good to an organization's long-range endeavor.

If giftedness becomes equated with privileges only available to a particular social or economic status, a whole new set of hostilities have to be dealt with. There is considerable evidence that giftedness is not bound to a social or economic class; all potential must be permitted to realize itself. Theoretically, that is one reason why we have public education. Parents must never forget that they are working for ***all*** the gifted. Their hopes for their own children's success are ultimately dependent on guaranteeing that all gifted children are offered an equal opportunity to succeed.

A Warning about Expectations

Here though, a word of caution is necessary. Expectations are equally as important as identification of options. Boundless ambition can sink any enterprise. Whether it is one's own or other peoples' minds one wishes to change, it is a slow and difficult process. Often parents of an organization are so convinced of the rightness of their position that they are unprepared to cope with the resistence, the outright hostility to their arguments, which they encounter. Wringing their hands, they cry, "What's the use?" or clenching their fists, they shrug, "What else can you expect from those establishment types?" Both these questions are rhetorical; neither do they require nor receive an answer.

A modest start with modest expectations is almost always the best. That way there is at least some chance of success. Don't undertake to change the entire curriculum or restructure the administration or rewrite the education code. That way lies certain disaster. There really isn't any "establishment" to change; there are only individuals with habits of mind flexible enough to consider alternatives or so rigid that they cannot contemplate change. Of course, there is legislation to be written or programs to be developed but these changes come only through moving individuals to act.

Some of these people will be in positions to assist your effort and will be venturesome enough to experiment. They will want to work for change in the proffered atmosphere of cooperation. If an organization accepts help from such individuals, it can at least waste less time on, if not forget, those others who hesitate out of fear or laziness, to admit that there might be another and better way of doing things. These latter will take their cues from the leaders.

If a few teachers, administrators, or legislators are persuaded that the argued position makes sense, a beginning has been made. And that should be enough to hope for at first. Getting that far, significant progress has been made. Now there are others out there who will also carry the message. From then on, it is a matter of taking time to consider every step carefully, asking if it will bring the results desired. Know who the audience is in each instance, and what it can accomplish. They should be persuaded to do what is possible for them to do. But the people contacted cannot respond usefully in areas where they have no influence. If the action desired is unrealistic, the result is bound to disappoint.

Organized persuasion is not an instant cure-all; it is a process to influence those who can effect change. And change occurs when such people are convinced that each development grows naturally out of what has preceded it. It takes time to develop, and it takes even more time to grow into that final goal of consensus. An independent and responsible parent organization can be a great asset to teachers, administrators, and legislators in the evolution of this whole process.

It must be remembered that involvement in a parent organization has degrees of commitment; that is, there will be those, usually few in number, who are willing to devote a great deal of time and energy to the work involved in changing the attitudes of educators and legislators. The larger part of the membership will be made up of those who wish to be involved only on special occasions when a show of solidarity is needed, or even more narrowly, when they can be reasonably assured that their efforts will meet with success. They will come to a school board meeting when the subject of gifted education is being considered, or if such a program's existence is being threatened; they may even publicly express their support for the program, but they will consider that having done that, they have done all they need to do.

There is in our society a deeply ingrained timidity before the authority of educators. No one wants to be suspected of meddling or favoring some children over others. These attitudes act as strong deterrents to parents to engage in the kind of prolonged activity that good organization work demands.

But for those undaunted few, who have the toughness to endure and are supported by the results of consensus, the tool of organized persuasion can make meaningful dialogue possible.

Finally, a parent organization must have some notion of the expectations of the people on the other side of the table. Do they view the organization's representatives as reasonable negotiators? If they do not, they cannot take the organization seriously. Arguing persuasively simply means providing those to be influenced with new information, not as a catalog of unrelated facts, but as an organized argument with clear conclusions and concrete proposals subscribed to by a constituency. If they come to expect this, they will listen, even if sometimes it is more out of curiosity for how the presentation is made than for what is actually said. The end result is the same, however; they will have heard from the organization, and if the presentation is also made available in clear and pointed written form; they will have a chance to mull over the position in quieter moments of reflection when there is less obvious pressure on them to act in predictably defensive ways.

No organization should be content to have only one person who does all the work, all the persuading, and all the decision making. When this happens, the organization forfeits the first requirement of organized persuasion—consensus. Particularly in the public arena, putting all affairs in the hands of one active participant, no matter how effective that person may be, will cost a parent group its validity in the minds of those it desires to influence. They will no longer see it as such-and-such an organization but as so-and-so's clique.

When this happens, both the organization and the individual lose their effectiveness. The individual, often unintentionally, usurps powers that belong rightfully to the organization. It is virtually impossible for an individual shouldering total responsibility, not to feel responsible for all decisions. Subtly the role changes from leader to boss, and the first resistance to the boss's decisions leads to internecine conflict. Total power in one place erodes the very flexibility that can make a body based on organized persuasion so beautifully able to deal with changing circumstances.

The governing board of an organization is made up of a number of people, all of whom must be willing to share duties. It also requires some regular turnover in its composition so that new and alternative possibilities can have a hearing. Otherwise, the organization is left with a gap when the time comes that any individual can no longer be involved.

Working on the District Level

But how does parent opinion on the district level get institutionalized? Undeniably deep, if often unspecified, discontent is frequently the primary stimulus for organized parent involvement in education. Certainly this is true in the area of gifted education. Since most involvement grows out of a controversy between parents and schools, the posture of the group toward the schools is naturally that of an adversary. From such a position, strong action can be taken which often results in improving conditions for gifted students. However, after a group's initial success, the adversary posture becomes obsolete and yet is likely to seem, through sheer habit, the only policy to fall back on, unless the organization has considered what it wishes to do next. Organizations which want to remain effective are, in any case, faced with the necessity of adjusting their position to a changed set of circumstances.

Though the conditions for controversy may still remain—for example, the recalcitrance of administrators and the hostility of teachers, to name two

conditions—organizations must be prepared to support developing programs and staff. Parent groups have to be able to discriminate between minor issues, usually surfacing at individual school sites, and the major one which is the need to establish stable policies of cooperation with gifted program and staff and support for the overall program. If the issue that initiated the organization in the first place required a strong and agressive position, the stable long-term policy probably, requires thoughtful flexibility. Here, a rigid reliance on the adversary posture can damage not only the organization's effectiveness, but also can ultimately undermine the position gained for gifted students. However, if subsequently an issue does arise that calls for stronger action, an organization which has demonstrated its good will has earned the right to anger and is in a good position to use it.

Changing habits of mind is difficult. But parent groups cannot afford to freeze in some stance that no longer meets the variety of needs demanded by a new program. It is in this context that organized persuasion can provide the flexibility for continuing cooperation. Flexibility, however, does not mean abandonment of standards; it does mean that organizations must avoid crises that militate against program development. And this condition is only possible if there is trust between parents and educators. Part of developing trust involves distinguishing between the legitimate areas of parent involvement and staff responsibility. Parent power has little effect if parents are unwilling to recognize their limits. The legitimacy of a parent organization depends on making proper use of the means provided by the district (or the state) for gifted education. Understanding the intention of the program, as viewed by the professionals, enhances the ability to bring about change in areas of fundamental disagreement. It is always necessary to keep the door open for dialogue between the organization and the gifted staff.

Both program and fiscal responsibility belong in the domain of the gifted staff and director. Cooperative support will tend to obligate both staff and director to seek the advice and counsel of the parent group regarding program goals and objectives. The director who doesn't include parents in his planning is either arrogant or frightened. Both attitudes are probably a response to the adversary stance and reveal not just the character of the director, but the weakness of the parent organization. It is up to the latter to map out a common ground where both sides can work comfortably without either side losing integrity.

Final decisions are made by the professionals. Parents have to understand this fact and avoid postures that can undermine that authority and lead to hostility or paralysis. This situation serves only to permit higher echelons of administration to stand in neutral territory rejoicing that they have contained another disturbance—and still do nothing for gifted students. While parents can do much to insure a successful program, no program is even possible without the professional's skills. This does not mean that parents need to become rubber stamps. They can assist staff in tasks that are necessary to a successful program without losing their right to question decisions when that need arises.

A balance then has to be maintained that weighs fairly between parent conviction and the knowledge of educators; this balance is achieved by working closely together on all matters, with a steady eye toward the students and their growth. The alert detachment of the professional must outweigh parental

emotion when the latter, as it often does, reflects the need of the parent more than that of the student. But parent conviction must not be automatically treated as ignorant intrusion by staff. In short, both parties must learn to respect each other's capacity to contribute. But respect ought not to imply uncritical mutual admiration. It should mean sympathetic honesty. Thus while staff has the right to criticize parents for sometimes indulging their egos, [illegible] have an equal right to criticize staff for occasionally thinking more [illegible] public relations than about public education. When these mutual rights are granted by both parties, parents can influence major decisions, staff can respond to constructive criticism, and children profit from the results.

Future of the Organization

After the first hurdle is crossed: where, then, organization? Is an organization's usefulness ended when its efforts result in an identifiable, funded gifted program? By no means. Whether mandated by district policy or established by state law, a gifted program can still suffer from neglect. An independent parent organization can serve as a deterrent to the loss of gifted priorities at higher levels of administration. Strong community support of the program is a great asset to both teachers and director in their struggle to maintain a quality program. With increasing pressures being brought to bear on school systems by a variety of community factions, gifted education requires also continuous support.

Even in California, which has long had a statewide gifted education option funded by "categorical aid" monies, the need for various parent involvement has been demonstrated innumerable times. While the decision to have a gifted program is discretionary at the district level, control of the funding for such programs is with the State Department of Education. Proposed programs must meet specific guidelines before the extra funding can be obtained.

Experience supports the conviction that there is genuine concern and careful assessment done at the state level. What happens in the district after approval is generally where questions of proper administration and program arise. The gap between proposal and implementation is often more like a chasm. One of the most disturbing aspects in gifted education is the large number of "paper" programs that have developed throughout the states. These have no reality beyond lip service and permit institutions to receive monies meant, but not used, for the gifted.

In California, the State Department's Gifted and Talented Education Management Team has developed a full set of guidelines to correct this situation. These guidelines are available in every district having a gifted program, but often parents have found that these useful tools are not properly disseminated throughout a district to enable involved district personnel to be aware of them. Organized parent involvement played an active role both in bringing these discrepancies to the team's attention and in providing suggestions during the development of guidelines. The team has dealt openly and graciously with parent groups since its inception by seeking their advice and cooperation.

This two-way exchange has made it possible for organizations to work more intelligently in their districts. Members have become familiar with the guidelines, the approved program proposal, and its interpretation in specific instances. When evidence of mismanagement is found, the organization is

informed sufficiently to be able to discuss the matter with the local school people. Only when questions cannot be resolved in a district does an organization appeal to state authority. To work effectively in this way, organizations need to develop policies on program objectives as set out by the district, either in support of them or to work for their change. The policies should correspond to the program planner's intentions and the state directives to gifted education. The approved program proposal sets the limits on what is to be accomplished. If an organization wants to alter those limits in any way, it must provide constructive suggestions to the program director for his consideration. This is accomplished often by establishing an organization advisory board which meets on a regular basis with the director.

Parent attention generally centers on two essential areas. They are the program of studies and the funding thereof.

Usually considered first, and most important by many, is the program and its relation to the district's curriculum development. The more integral the program is to general curriculum, the greater will be its strength. Program is the very heart of gifted education, and it is through a properly developed and realized program that gifted education earns the support of parents, educators, and legislators. It is the visible manifestation justifying present and future support. Ultimately the form and effectiveness of a gifted program reflects the quality and level of a district's general curriculum offerings, particularly in academic courses.

The requirement, in California, for a "qualitatively different" gifted program assumes a structure that differs in quality or level of complexity. Ideally, this does not mean that fifth graders are doing sixth grade work, or additional fifth grade work, but rather that gifted fifth graders are pursuing the fifth grade curriculum extended and deepened. Because of the limitation on gifted funds, a gifted program minimum of 200 minutes a week has been set. This minimum of qualitatively different education is not going to produce miracles for any child. Only when the 200 minutes becomes an integral part of a high-level district-wide curriculum is it possible to provide gifted children with the opportunity to learn to their fullest potential.

Of course, it is impossible to address the whole educational design of a district, but it is possible to identify the most glaring problems of gifted education in the context of a district's curriculum and work to solve them. Thus, general curriculum is a legitimate and necessary area for parent involvement.

The other area is the use of gifted funds. These may be used only for staff and materials which would not otherwise be provided for gifted students, and should be so coded in the district's total budget. Parent organizations need to work for a separate, gifted budget within the overall budget. The aim of this effort is to make it possible to watch at key points how gifted funds are spent. Put in their own category, gifted monies are less prone to get lost than if they are included in general funds.

If the law governing the use of gifted funds is not observed, a district may be penalized or lose these monies entirely, and, of course, probably lose its program, too. Accountability is a major concern. A strong organizational policy on this matter can be of great value to a program director in securing jurisdiction of the uses of gifted monies.

When organized persuasion has been used to establish an awareness of gifted education and has helped develop or strengthen a genuine program, the task is far from done. Situations continually change and can imperil all the hard-won accomplishments of the past. Since any achievement is not an immutable perfection, there always is the possibility for future improvements. An organization must stay alive to these possibilities. On the larger scene, laws need making or improving as more gifted students are located and programs continue to expand. As long as there are gifted children, there will be the need for parents organized to protect and improve gifted education. And as long as those in authority are susceptible to effectively offered reason, persuasion will be the best method to reach these ends.

CHAPTER IV: WAYS TO ORGANIZE STATEWIDE AND LOCAL GROUPS

Are You an "Only"? Organize for the Gifted and Talented!

by Kay Coffey

He who would do good to another must do it in minute particulars . . . . . .

For art and science cannot exist but in minutely organized particulars.

William Blake

So you have a gifted and talented child who has many unmet needs? So you are an educator who realizes these children yearn—consciously or unconsciously—for an opportunity they are not being given in regular classrooms? Are you a citizen seeing your country's future dependent on the development of gifted and talented students, our greatest natural resource?

"Why don't ***they*** do something about it?" you ask.

We are privileged to live in a great country where ***you*** are the government—where ***you*** are the one who can do something about meeting this need. ***You***—a parent, educator, or citizen—hold the future of these children and your country in ***your*** hands!

Do you ask, "What can I do? I am ***only*** one person." ***You*** can join with other "onlies" and, with mututal support, discover:

how to recognize these gifted and talented children,
what kinds of programs would challenge them to develop to their fullest,
who is responsible for meeting their needs,
what is presently being done,
what is the legal and administrative framework,
what is potentially feasible.

Throughout the nation, groups of individuals have organized to work on a continuing basis to improve facilities and programs for the gifted and talented, to share experiences, ideas and resources, and to "yell, tell and sell" for the gifted and talented.

Will you join the movement? Will you organize for the gifted and talented?

How big a beginning are you willing to take? Both local and statewide groups are needed and useful. In these days of minimum financing of most public schools, knowledge of ***state*** law funding, and policies is important for ***local*** school boards to allocate sufficient supplementary funds to establish total programs. And herein lies the value of individuals or groups throughout a state working together in a state organization, informed and ready to speak out locally or statewide for gifted and talented.

However, a start must be made in some community, area or division of a state. In Louisiana, we started by incorporating as a state nonprofit organization with membership from a metropolitan area (four parishes or counties) with the built-in plan to allow chapters in other parts of the state to join as they are organized. Work of the association is performed by active members on a voluntary basis.

Helpful information for a local organization was obtained from Gifted Children's Association of San Fernando Valley, Inc.[4] to whom we are indebted for sharing their expertise and experience. As they so aptly stated, "You are about to embark on a rewarding, satisfying and sometimes frustrating experience." An excellent book has been published since we organized, written by Jeanne L. Delp and Ruth A. Martinson, ***The Gifted and Talented: A Handbook for Parents.*** [2]

Following are specific steps that may be taken to make your organization a viable and effective force in your community and state. We have tried to develop from our experience a step-by-step approach to starting an organization. Our hope is that it will help others to feel a degree of assurance that major elements have been considered in planning and that more people can join in the movement for the gifted and talented.

Temporary Steering Committee for Local Organization

1. ***Realize the special needs gifted children have***. The notion that "gifted will make it on their own" is false. The teacher in a regular classroom must present facts and concepts with methods that will be understood at the lowest cognitive level because of the wide range of student abilities in the class. The lessons result in merely a "pouring in" of information, developing only the ability to recognize or recall information—knowledge, the lowest cognitive level. Gifted students need to be stimulated to utilize their other abilities.

B. S. Bloom[1] has classified mental ability in a taxonomy as follows: knowledge, comprehension, analysis, application, synthesis and evaluation. Cornelia Tongue [11] has developed "A Brief Explanation of the Taxonomy" and "Example Questions Geared to Bloom's Taxonomy" which are available from her upon request.

J.P. Guilford has analyzed mental abilities in his "Structure of the Intellect." [5] Mary Meeker [9] has written a synopsis of these concepts, which is also available from her upon request.

These digests should be of great help for understanding basic goals of education to meet the special needs of the gifted.

2. ***Understand the characteristics of gifted children***. Giftedness has many facets and is generally considered to be present in the upper three to five percent of the population. Numerous researchers and other educators have developed screening instruments as methods to identify potentially gifted students. Listed in the appendix on page are gifted qualities for preschool and elementary children. These are ***merely a few of the many characteristics found by educators*** involved in the field of the gifted. Of course, no ***one*** child would have all of these superior qualities.

Parents should not be timid in recommending their child for gifted education when they have an understanding of the characteristics. They, more

than any other person, have the time and opportunity to recognize their child's special talents.

Martinson [8] is quoted: "In a study of various means for screening and identifying gifted kindergarten children, G. Walton [12] found teacher judgments ***alone*** would have resulted in referral of only one in five children later identified as gifted on the Stanford-Binet." Also, J.C. Jacobs [6] found that kindergarten teachers only nominated ten percent of children who had been identified as gifted. Parents proved to be far more accurate." A very complete syllabus on current research including characteristics and identification through all the school years was written by Martinson, a pioneer educator of the gifted, for use by the National/State Leadership Training Institute on the Gifted and the Talented.[10]

3. ***Understanding what can be done to fulfill the needs of the gifted.*** Programming for gifted students to develop their special abilities is a real challenge. The goal of efforts to meet their needs should be centered on developing their potentials in the higher order of thinking skills, in creativity, and in the understanding of and the nurturing of a love for their fellow man.

Many materials are available to point the way for both parents and teachers. Sandra Kaplan [7] has written an excellent "starter" book, ***Providing Programs for the Gifted and Talented.*** We must recognize the shared responsibility of both school and parents in the students' development.

In the School

Various administrative arrangements may be made by schools to establish an environment for working with the gifted. Students profit by being with other students of similar ability, as they are able to stimulate and challenge each other. It is therefore important that they be able to interact some portion of the time.

Some alternative settings are the following:

Special classes: self-contained classrooms in which all students are identified as gifted and meet on a full or part-time basis. The number of students is generally smaller than the regular classroom. Many authorities believe twelve students is an ideal number.

Cluster grouping: a classroom including 8-10 gifted students who can work together as a group a portion of the time.

Cross grade: a self-contained classroom with 10-15 gifted students from two or three grades.

Resource room: a room equipped with special materials for in-depth study of matters not ordinarily taught in a regular classroom. Students could attend certain hours a day or week, on a regular basis, spending the balance of their time in a regular classroom.

A mobile unit: a resource room on wheels that can be taken to several schools on an itinerant basis.

An itinerant teacher: a traveling teacher who serves students in several schools for certain hours a day or week.

Independent study: contracts between student and teacher to do work missed in regular class while working on another project, often away from school. The student may work independently with teacher supervision.

Resource teacher for teachers: a person who works with the regular classroom teacher to prescribe special projects or challenges for the gifted students in a regular class.

Joint enrollment programs: high school courses and college or university classes taken concurrently.

Advanced placement classes: courses in high school which prepare students to take college-equivalent courses. Upon completion of courses, students take advanced placement examinations to obtain college credit.

Learning resource kits: material designed by resource teachers to be placed in the regular classroom for the student to use independently.

Other arrangements are student internships, mentorships, research field trips and/or seminars.

Excellence, enrichment and acceleration are all part of the gifted program. ***Whatever administrative structure is used, the student should obtain a sequential education as well as develop the higher levels of thinking, be encouraged in creativity, and grow in feeling for his fellow man.***

Out-of-school

The students have many out-of-school hours and ***many challenges may be made available by your organization***.

Fascinating after-school, Saturday and summer short courses (mini-courses) may be offered to students from pre-school through high school. Gifted Children's Association of San Fernando Valley, Inc. [4] and the Gifted Child Society, Inc. [3], of Oakland, New Jersey, have had successful programs of this nature for fifteen years or more and offer many ideas of subject context which are stimulating and developmental to students. Exhibits II and III in the Appendix list the titles of courses. Descriptions of courses and content may be obtained from the associations directly upon request.

The Association for Gifted and Talented Students in Louisiana, Greater New Orleans Chapter, has offered a few courses which have been highly successful and stimulating. One, for instance, was creative dramatics in which fourth and fifth grade students together wrote a play, planned and made the scenery and costumes, acted the parts, took movies, edited and clipped the film, and held a premiere showing for their parents and other guests. This was done in four Saturday sessions under the guidance of a University of New Orleans dramatics instructor. It proved to be an exciting and informative experience, with lasting effects.

Organized efforts on your part can play an extensive role in offering developmental opportunities for ***your gifted***. More details in managing of courses are given in the portion concerning organizational committees under "Mini-course Committee" (page 57).

Colleges and universities are rich in resources and interest in gifted and talented. Professors and their student assistants can open new worlds for the gifted. Their resources laboratories, observatories, and mental challenges—are unending if you tap them. Support and cooperate with their efforts to offer mini-courses to meet students' needs and encourage participation by students.

Business and industries, large and small, can share their methods and special techniques with the students. It is very beneficial to the students

to have the opportunity to visit manufacturing firms and to learn the theoretical and practical aspects as well as methods of quality control. For instance, the use of a laboratory in an industrial plant demonstrates the relation of academic disciplines to careers.

A variety of professional people (doctors, lawyers, judges, accountants, social workers, probation officers, geologists, engineers, etc.) may be willing to counsel with gifted students regarding their particular career and the personal characteristics and strengths which are utilized in that career.

List governmental agencies by subject matter offered, when available to students. Administrative offices of a city, parish or county such as a mayor or president, the city council or commission council, and the entire judicial department could afford an excellent base of understanding. The same is true of any state and federal department with responsibility in your area.

4. ***Seek out other parents who have gifted and talented children***. Ask principals and teachers to help you contact other parents whose children may be gifted. Children are excellent judges of their peers. Ask them who they would like for a teammate in a competitive event to solve a difficult problem. Discuss your search and the potential challenge for the gifted with your local newspaper editor and request that an announcement be placed in the paper, suggesting interested parents to call you. Place notices or posters in libraries, both on the major bulletin boards and in the children's portion of the library. Place notices at schools. Write to parent organization presidents requesting them to make announcements regarding your search.

5. ***Begin with a reasonably sized steering committee (seven to ten).*** Take time to develop a mutual understanding of the goals you will have as an organization. Decide on the structure your organization will need to reach your goals.

The steering committee members need an understanding of characteristics, identification, and needs of gifted children, as well as potential resources, before they can effectively communicate these to others and lead in developing an organization.

6. ***Select a chairperson of the steering committee to act as coordinator of all efforts.*** Name treasurer and chairpersons of committees to develop plans and be responsible for specific jobs needed to be done in starting an association.

> *1) A Bylaws Committee* of three or more persons should be selected to develop suggested bylaws for the organization. Copies of bylaws of other associations might be obtained as guides. (Louisiana's Association for Gifted Bylaws correlate state and chapter bylaws, with the division of responsibilities, and with suggested chapter bylaws.) In this case, a group need only to fill in the blanks or make changes desired. These may be helpful as a guide.
>
> *2) A Program Committee* should be selected to find and recommend program resources in your area. These resources may include local administrative personnel, other educators, interested professional and business people, and staff from colleges or universities in your area. Include all possible means to inform your members regarding the needs of the gifted (psychological, educational, etc.) as well as the laws and policies with which the schools have to work to meet the needs of gifted students.

3) A Publicity Committee should be selected to organize the use of every avenue of publicity in the community. Local press radio, and television should be given written information regarding your organization, meeting places, time, program and plans. Posters could be placed in libraries, businesses and other areas.

4) A Hospitality Committee should be appointed to plan the development of a spirit of friendliness within the group. Both men and women should be on the committee. The serving of coffee and/or other simple refreshments is helpful to obtain interaction of those in attendance.

5) Membership Committee

a. This committee should have materials available to accept payment of membership dues at the first meeting, as soon as bylaws (which include amount of dues) are accepted. Dues payments may be effectively handled by having at hand a short form (Exhibit IV in the Appendix, see page 55 for sample.) indicating name, address, city, zip code, home and office telephones and a place to check status as parent, educator or other. A check or cash could be attached by the person joining and the process could be handled quickly.

b. A questionnaire should be developed in order that volunteers may offer to serve on various committees. Exhibit IV in the Appendix, page 53, is designed for metropolitan New Orleans and may be modified for use in any community. Maximum effort should be made to ***involve*** interested persons.

c. A community-resources form should be developed for the purpose of encouraging persons in attendance to offer available learning experiences to the gifted. This could be an opportunity to find hidden talents in homemakers and hobbyists, in addition to professionals and businesses. Exhibit V in the Appendix, page 54, is utilized in metropolitan New Orleans and might be adapted for other areas.

d. This committee should plan to conduct a membership drive with the help of the publicity committee and the school administration.

6) Public Affairs Committee. Cooperating with local school officials, this committee should meet with school board members, school superintendent, director of special education, director of instruction, director of psychological testing and any other personnel who might be involved with services to the gifted. Members should ***become knowledgeable*** about school programs and what can be done within restrictions of laws and policy, and through the use of local, state and federal funds. The committee can encourage the use of funds in ways that are meaningful to the children in your community and keep the membership informed of needs and potential concerns.

7. ***Establish a date, time and place for a public meeting,*** select a program of interest, have the publicity committee utilize all the avenues to inform the public, and see that the other committees are ready to function.

At the first public meeting, it would be well to adopt bylaws to formalize the organization. A break should be planned for payment of dues and completion of membership information. The amount of dues will have just been democratically decided upon with the adoption of the bylaws.

Officers may be elected at the first organizational meeting, or a nominating committee may be elected to nominate officers at the next meeting. The

Steering Committee should continue to be in charge of meetings until officers are elected and installed. Each candidate for office or for nominating committee should be a member of the association with current dues paid and his consent be obtained before his name is placed in nomination. Officers should represent various areas and interests in the community and be dedicated to the gifted. Since gifted children and youth are found in all socio-economic, cultural and ethnic groups, it is very important to focus on a ***democratic organization from the start and avoid projecting an elitist image.***

8. ***Each chapter or local organization*** is required to apply for an Internal Revenue Service business number, in addition to the state association, if there is one.

Permanent Local Organization

The long term success of your organization will depend on both the quality and quantity of members ***personally involved*** in the work of the organization. People have varying degrees of ability and time to take leadership or supportive roles.

It is the ***responsibility*** of the officers and chairpersons to see that the maximum possible number of members have "a piece of the action" and are given the opportunity to grow in capability and interest. Members' commitment of time and talents to the "gifted" organization is dependent on the acceptance and challenge of the leadership. Sometimes a leader feels that it would take less time and energy to "do it himself" than to find someone else to guide. However, developing other people in their ability to participate, and in their commitment to the group effort, builds the scope of your organization.

Committees consisting of chairperson and committee members planning together toward goals can contribute toward a strong organization. Care should be used to see that any plan submitted by a committee has been well thought out with detailed plans of action, costs, and financing before being brought to the Executive Board for approval. Time and action of the board members at their meetings should not be expended on doing committee planning that should have been previously studied, but should be spent on evaluating committee recommendations.

Checklists of committees and work to be done should be distributed at meetings so that all members have the opportunity and are encouraged to become ***participants***. Committee chairpersons have the ***obligation*** to give those who offer to help an opportunity to join in committee planning and functioning. Utilize information obtained on a talent sheet such as that in Exhibit IV, in the Appendix, page 53.

Community Resource questionnaires (see Exhibit V in the Appendix) should also be distributed at meetings in order that students may have the benefit of doors opened to them.

Do not be depressed because the organization may start with a few people. The group will grow and be able to serve more and more gifted students as the word spreads to other parents who are seeking such support for their own children. Our goal must be to find all gifted and talented children to help them develop their potential.

Don't be an "only." Your child is one among many, and you as a parent will find others "out there" seeking the same goals and creative solutions.

Exhibit VII lists suggested activities and resources for permanent standing committees and can be found on page 56.

State Organization

A state organization is a vital agent in forming cohesive leadership for the gifted and talented. Constant communication between a local group, state leaders and other local groups is the only way to have a real "handle" on effecting change for the betterment of opportunities and facilities for these special students.

Each group can learn much from the other—and put it together in state leadership for all. Local school policies and programming must mesh with state school policies and guidelines. Decisions made locally are affected by decision makers from all over the state. Any group is limited in its ability to obtain maximum and continuing services for gifted and talented students unless it works on a statewide basis.

At the beginning in Louisiana, where no state or local association for gifted and talented students existed, we decided to incorporate as a state association, encouraging membership and/or affiliated chapters from all parts of the state. During the first term all officers were in Greater New Orleans and our meetings were held in this area; however, newsletters and other information were sent to all paid members and to other interested individuals.

As we were able to obtain membership of chapters and individuals from other areas of the state, officers were elected on a statewide basis. A Greater New Orleans Chapter with its officers and committees was formed as a separate entity to function in the local area within the framework of the statewide organization, as other chapters do. We now have 23 parishes (counties) represented on our state board and membership from throughout the state. We were incorporated less than two years ago.

The Bylaws for the state and local organizations were written to mesh insofar as objects, policies and divisions of responsibility and other matters required for corporate protection were concerned.

The State Bylaws include officers and their duties and responsibilities as well as the means of statewide representation on the governing board. Election of officers is by the membership at the annual convention.

The Local Bylaws include maximum local autonomy of the chapter. Suggestions of procedure are made but are left to the discretion of the local organization as to their adoption. Since these suggested bylaws are available, with the necessity of chapters simply filling in the blanks as to their desires, new groups may organize with little difficulty.

Membership statewide was obtained by asking school administrators and friends in various areas of the state to recommend others who might be interested in working for the cause of gifted and talented. Talks were made to groups in various parts of the state about what could be accomplished by organizing for the gifted and talented.

Plans in the process of completion include the following:

1) Articles are to be sent to all news media in the state, including daily, neighborhood and weekly newspapers, television and radio stations, telling of the identification and needs of the gifted and the availability of opportunities for the organization membership.

2) Posters including information about the association and its address will be sent to all public libraries in the state with the request that they be placed on bulletin boards both in general areas of the library and in the children's departments. Lists of libraries may probably be obtained from your State Department of Education.

3) Local school administrations' director of instruction will be asked to assist in finding leadership to organize chapters. Or, a search among the people who respond to the above (1 and 2) may locate leadership.

In addition to carrying out responsibilities as outlined in the bylaws, ***members of the state managing board*** should be ***missionaries*** to help in organizing chapters and ***leaders*** in furnishing resources for various committees of the chapters. An officer or chairperson on the state board should be responsible for developing resources for several local chapter committees. Members who have been outstanding in taking responsibility in the chapters should be brought into state leadership.

The publicity chairperson should work closely with the membership chairperson to develop informative articles for all news media in the state, always including means of contacting the state association. Subjects for articles could include characteristics of gifted and talented students, opportunities available to them throughout the state and nation, specific activities of the state association.

The public affairs chairperson should become familiar with the state laws, funding (on-going or potential), policies, procedures, personnel involved, and how these mesh with the local school policies and potentials. Continuing information regarding developments in the State Department of Education, the legislature or other state offices should be given to both chapters and individual members. The chairperson should work with chapter public affairs chairperson and others interested to keep membership informed regarding governmental developments for the gifted and talented.

A program chairperson should develop resources and ideas for interesting and relevant programs and projects that may be used by chapters and the state association.

A newsletter editor should develop a regular communication to all members. Information regarding happenings in chapters and the state, opportunities throughout the nation for the gifted and talented, reports of conferences, and research—all should be reported to membership. Such a communication could develop interested and informed members.

The officers of the association should plan and implement the annual convention. The convention should include:

a business meeting,
training and resources for local chapter officers, chairpersons and members,
highlights of school programming in the state,
planned program and participation of children—pre-school through high school,
happenings on the national level,
national professional and research developments,
state and national opportunities available for the gifted and talented.

Cooperation with the State Department of Education personnel assigned to the gifted and talented program can be a tremendous asset in planning and implementing the convention.

****

These ideas for developing both state and chapter organization are just starters—to get your organization in motion.

We truly feel like the mathematics teacher who was told by his principal one day that the following day he would start teaching Latin. Although the teacher insisted that he could not do this because he had never had Latin in school, the principal replied that nevertheless that was his class. The following day the teacher told the Latin class: "Your assignment for tomorrow is lesson one. I'm on lesson two. Catch me if you can."

Let's work together for mutual growth and sharing of ideas in our efforts to develop our greatest natural resource!

CHAPTER V: "HOMEWORK" WITH THE GIFTED AND TALENTED CHILD

Practical Hints for Parents of Gifted Children

by Gina Ginsberg

Children begin by loving their parents;
As they grow older they judge them;
sometimes they forgive them.
Oscar Wilde

If you are the parent of a child who does things a little earlier, a little better, a little faster, and maybe a little differently from most other children, you are probably the lucky parent of a gifted child. That means, among other things, that you have a child who is curious and excited about everything under the sun, who is able and eager to communicate with you, and who wants to share feelings and information when he or she is still a very small person.

Parents are Children's First Teachers

Parents are their children's first teachers and as such have the greatest and most lasting impact on their lives. They are first in line to offer values, shape attitudes, and dispense information. So, if you are the parent of a gifted child, take heart, rise to the challenge, and cross your fingers; your child may be our president one day, write a perfect symphony, find a cure for cancer, or improve the quality of our lives in whatever direction his or her gifts lead.

The hints which follow are the result of much trial and error, soul searching, and the fervent wish that somebody had given me this information when my own children were younger. They were probably my most valuable teachers and certainly, my most vocal and severest critics. My heart and thanks go to them for being their gifted selves and the free spirits they have become.

Twenty Helpful Hints

1. Gifted children are children first and gifted second. A five year old may be able to solve mathematical problems worth bragging about to the grandparents, but he has only lived five years, and only behavior reasonable for a five year old should be expected of him.

2. Enjoy! Of all the problems children have, giftedness is the best one. Your gifted child may try your stamina and endurance at times, but enthusiasm and lust for learning will more than make up for the pace. Your argumentative youngster may be practicing to become a great trial lawyer, and the artwork taped to your refrigerator may promise competition to Rembrandt in spite of the fact that you cannot tell which way is "up". Relax and enjoy the excitement.

3. Listen to your gifted child. Dinner may be about to burn and the telephone ringing, but ***listen*** because the question may be important and, if ignored, the curiosity to ask may disappear. The one thing we can all give our children is our undivided attention—at least, most of the time.

4. Don't compare your gifted child to other children. It places on the gifted one the responsibility to be gifted all the time, and it certainly is not fair to whoever comes off second best. Every child is unique and special in some way. So—cool it.

5. It is a great big wonderful world. Show it to your gifted children in the form of trips, books, music, museums, fire stations, digs, interesting people, wiggly things, daisy chains, and the magical chemistry that makes a cake rise.

6. Let them specialize if they want to. You may not enjoy living with dinosaurs by the year, but there are fringe benefits. They could be learning to do research, keeping notes, knowing the Dewey Decimal System, and keeping some kind of order in that disaster area that passes for a room, after you learn that there are things more important than neatness.

7. Education is expensive. Start saving now.

8. Children don't have to be gainfully employed every waking minute. There should be time to daydream, do baby things, and to lie on an unmade bed and contemplate the ceiling. Gifted children are usually creative children, and it is hard to be creative on schedule.

9. Don't expect your gifted child to live up to your unfulfilled aspirations. You may dream of "my son or daughter, the doctor", but he or she may have other heroes.

10. Let them do for themselves what they say they can do, because they probably know. If the child's judgment is faulty, that is learning too. Gifted children are future leaders who thrive on early responsibility. Parents are the ones who have the problem of letting go.

11. Praise your gifted child because he or she needs all the encouragement available. Praise him or her for the wonderful things accomplished. If the great experiment does not work and the shaky tower of blocks comes tumbling down, praise the child for trying. Inquiring minds must take intellectual risks, and risk taking needs to be supported and praised. Constructive criticism, recognizing good effort, is a form of praise, too.

12. Discipline is necessary and comes in the same shape for all brothers and sisters, whether gifted, curley-headed, or slowpokes. Giftedness is no excuse for unacceptable behavior.

13. Recognize that there are times to reach out a helping hand, and that there are times to get out of the way. Knowing the difference makes you a very gifted parent.

14. You cannot expect your perceptive gifted child to develop a high sense of morality if you cheat on your income tax. Would George Washington lie?

15. Let your home be a place where knowledge is valued and the quest for learning respected.

16. Remember that the fine line between encouragement and pushing may make the difference between a happy and productive youngster and an unfulfilled, underachieving child.

17. Be a welcome person at your child's school. You cannot switch to the competition (another public school system) anyway—there isn't any. Support the school's effort to provide for your child's special learning needs and demonstrate your genuine interest in quality education for all children.

18. Give houseroom to books and magazines, give prime time at the dinner table for discussion of topics of interest by all members of the family, and give praise to all efforts in the pursuit of excellence.

19. Parents of gifted children are people too. They need help and guidance in understanding and appreciating the special needs of their children without feeling inferior or jealous. Hostile feelings could lead to over protection, domination, or exploitation of the child.

20. Don't expect your gifted child to be gifted all the time. That kind of halo makes for a very bad headache.

Remember, it is a privilege to be the parent of a gifted child. Most of the time it means a lot of fun, but sometimes the responsibility of helping your children become all they can become weighs heavily. I really don't think that you or I personally, can make the whole world a better place, but maybe one day our children will. We are fortunate parents indeed.

EPILOGUE: FRIENDLY PERSUASION

The Gentle Art of Informed, Committeed Parents

by Carrol Lockhart

Thee I love.
More than the meadows so green and still,
More than the mulberries on the hill,
More than the buds on the may-apple tree,
I love thee.

Arms have I, strong as the oak for this occasion;
Lips have I to kiss thee too, in Friendly Persuasion.

Thee is mine, though I don't know many words of praise.
Thee pleasures me in a hundred ways.
So, put on your bonnet, your cape and your glove—
And come with me,—

For thee I love.

Friendly Persuasion (Thee I Love)
W: Paul Francis Webster
M: Dimitri Tiomkin
Copyright c 1956 Leo Feist, Inc.
Used by permission

A commitment is a pledge to do something. It is the cement that binds individuals and groups together. Commitment means action. We must have facts, correct and true for the occasion, and arguments to give in "friendly persuasion." What does it really mean to commit ourselves to something? There is in all of us a deep need to feel involved in the world out there; a need for self-esteem; a need for competency, productivity—the need to feel connected in a vital way to life and have our actions count.

Involvement comes only through commitment to some kind of affirmative action. It is what we choose to do that determines the nature of our commitment as we "put on our glove and work for thee." Commitment is how we look at things. If we see our involvement with the task clearly—our commitments become meaningful.

Three bricklayers at work were asked what they were doing. The first man explained that he was putting one layer of bricks on another and smoothing concrete between them; the second man explained that he was building a wall which would be part of a large structure of so many feet wide and so many feet tall.

But the third man said, "I am working on this building which will be a school where children will learn and play." He was clear about his involvement with the bricklaying task, making a meaningful commitment. Remember, commitment is the cement that binds individuals and groups together.

We must look for new ways of growing within our commitment by being open to receiving input and to exchanging ideas. When we make a commitment we cannot hope to derive greater satisfaction or feedback from the job than we are willing to give to it.

Efforts of dedicated parents working in the gifted movement across the country should be considered a part of the team. In many instances the people working ***outside*** the professional structure are the key change agents in the state. The very fact that they are outside the system frees them in such a way to use their talents in a creative and effective manner.

The concept of parent involvement is a growing idea among educators today. The National/State Leadership Training Institute on the Gifted and the Talented recognized this fact by including parents in their approach. The parents who have been the most successful in their states have educated themselves to a professional level on the needs of the gifted. They have learned the facts to support those needs. Armed with statistics and knowledge, who can better explode the gifted "myths" entertained by many legislators, school boards, and/or congressmen.

The following steps to action are necessary for parents to become effective "Friendly Persuaders": First, make the ***decision*** that your actions can count and you are ready to commit yourself to that decision. Your second step should be ***awareness*** of the myths that surround your child.

You must have a ready answer that fits your philosophy to questions such as "What is your definition of a gifted child?" Document the answer with facts. If you are lucky and live in the state capitol the state library may be able to loan you the Commissioner of Education's Report to Congress, March 1972. Read it, or better, memorize it. It has every statistic you will need to back up your arguments.

The third step is **evaluation** of your state's programs in making provisions for gifted and talented education. A parent of a gifted child has the ***experience*** of living with that child, knowing the frustrations of that child. You can speak with the conviction of a parent.

Exploration is the fourth step. Start "knocking on doors." Remember, it's always better to start at the top. Who do you know in education or politics—the decision makers? Then who do they know who will write a letter, make a phone call, maybe sponsor legislation?

Organization is the last step. AGE (Association for Gifted Education) was started in Austin, Texas, by forming a steering committee of interested people. In six months, we had six hundred members. An attorney did the legal work free of charge and the rest of us paid for the state charter.

As the example of the third bricklayer showed, commitment is basically an attitude toward one's activity. Let's keep our vision as he did, as large as our task.

"So, I'll put on my bonnet, my cape and my glove and work for thee. For thee I love."

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(Prices, as of 1975, subject to change.)

APPENDIX: CHAPTER IV

Exhibit I: Qualities of Gifted Children

In the Pre-School Years:

In the language area:

- early speech
- early reading
- understanding of word and concept relationships (such as up-down, top-bottom, big-little)
- following three-step directions

In the physical area:

- skipping
- bouncing a ball
- tying shoe laces
- reproducing a rhythm beat
- drawing a person

In the creative area:

- interpreting stories in one's own words
- predicting possible outcomes for a story
- creating rhymes which communicate
- offering solutions for problems
- displaying curiosity

In the social area:

- readily adapting to new situations
- seeking new tasks and activities
- cooperating with others
- persisting at a task
- generally directing the activity in which one is involved
- being happy and well adjusted in group situations

In the Elementary School Years:

Learning characteristics:

- reading two or more years above grade level
- showing rapid insight into cause-effect relationships
- readily grasping underlying principles, similarities, and differences
- being a keen and alert observer
- reading a great deal on one's own
- reasoning things out for oneself

Motivational characteristics:

- becoming absorbed in certain topics
- persisting in seeking task completion when interested
- being bored with routine tasks
- exhibiting self-criticism
- needing minimal direction from teachers

Learning characteristics:

taking responsibility
following through with tasks
showing self confidence with children of same age as well as with adults
commanding respect from classmates
showing ability to express oneself well
displaying flexibility in thought and action
appearing not to be disturbed when normal routine is changed
participating in school activities

Talented pupil characteristics:

having curiosity about many things
generating solutions to problems
seeing many aspects of one thing
fantasizing
manipulating ideas
being a high risk-taker
being adventurous and speculative
displaying a keen sense of humor
being sensitive to beauty
demonstrating unusual ability in painting, drawing, sculpturing, clay modeling, music, role playing, or writing

Social characteristics:

showing sensitivity to feelings of others or to situations
needing little outside control (self-disciplined)

Exhibit II: Mini-Courses
Sponsored by
Gifted Children's Association of San Fernando Valley, Inc.
8320 Reseda Boulevard
Northridge, CA 91324

Pre-school	It's a Small World Reading Games with a Twist
1st grade	Junk Shop for First Graders One-Two... A Trick Just for You From Paints to Pudding The Wonders Within You
1st–2nd grades	Reading is Fun and Games Exploring Art Fossils, Dinosaurs, and Early Man
2nd–3rd grades	Magic Mania Wonderful World of Math Visitors from Space Fossils, Dinosaurs, and Early Man Where Did All the Monsters Go? Nuts 'N' Bolts Stir Crazy (Boy's Cooking) Fish, Fish, and More Fish Imagination Unlimited Junk Shop Life in a Drop of Pond Water Computers are Fun Arts and Crafts for the Fun of It Pens, Pencils, and Brushes Flight Animal Behavior Visitors from Space
2nd–6th grades	Recorder
3rd–4th grades	"A" is for Art Meet a Cell Face to Face
3rd–5th grades	A Dirty Business
4th–6th grades	Boom Town Chess – Beginning and Intermediate Trick Photography Let's Make a Magazine Zoology
5th–6th grades	Three Dimensional Design
5th–7th grades	Art Techniques
5th–8th grades	Outdoor Survival Crafts Story of Archaeology Plane Talk (Ground School Flying) Horsemanship Fun With Cartoons
7th–10th grades	Field Ecology in Action The Magic of Motion Pictures
7th–Sr. High	Speed Reading and Study Efficiency Crime and Punishment
9th–Sr. High	Seminar on Legal Issues

Exhibit III: Mini-Courses
Sponsored by
Gifted Child Society, Inc. of Oakland, New Jersey
59 Glen Gray Road
Oakland, NJ 07436

4–5 years	"A" is for Art
	Science and Other Things
	Music for Young People
	Dinosaur Dynasty
5–6 years	Mini Scientists
	Sizzle & Brr
	Animal Kingdom
	Fun with Music
	Puppet Playhouse
	Dinosaur Dynasty
	Art for Young People
	Nature Arts
6–7 years	Over 200 Bones and 500 Muscles
	Mini Music Makers
	Beginning Sculpture
	American Heritage
	Science Smorgasbord
	All Kinds of Science
	Energy Crisis!
	Exploring the Blue Planet
	Paint Pots, Puppets, and Prints
	The Human Body
7–8 years	Model Rocketry
	Saturday Morning at the Movies
	Decisions! Decisions!
	Electricity
	It's Magic
	Great Stories from Great Music
	Get Into the Act
	The Anatomy of a Hospital
	The Numbers Game
	Chemistry or Magic?
	Printmaking, Plastics, Pizzaz!
8–10 years	Startrek
	Numberama
	When I Grow Up. . . .
	U. F. O. & Other Phenomena
	YOU the Consumer
	Saturday Workshop Newspaper
9–11 years	Introduction to Computers
	Space Lab
	Aerodynamics
	Chemistry or Magic II?
9 and up (4th grade & up)	So You Like to Argue
	Advanced Rocketry
	Student Advisory Council
	Animated Films
	Rap Session
	Advanced Computers
	World Power

Exhibit IV: "Talent Pool" Form for Parent Organization

ASSOCIATION FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS IN LOUISIANA

_____ CHAPTER

"Association" means people workiing together for a common purpose.

Let's pool our talents to accomplish our goal:
Developing to the maximum Louisiana's greatest natural resources—
Gifted and talented children and youth.

Volunteers are needed for committees to obtain a fully functioning organization. Please check the area or areas in which you are willing to serve in the work of the Association for Gifted and Talented Students.

____	Program	____	Bulletin
____	Publicity	____	Library
____	Membership	____	Mimeographing
____	Telephone	____	Offset Facilities
____	Mini-Course Aides	____	Address Envelopes
____	Community Resources	____	Typing
____	Public Affairs	____	Stencil Cutting
____	Budget	____	Office Assistance
____	Finance	____	Federal Funding
____	Scholarships & Awards	____	Newsletter
____	Other		

Signed _____

Street _____

City _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____

Exhibit V: Community Resource Form for Parent Organization

Desired Community Resources

Students benefit tremendously when they have the opportunity to visit manufacturing firms and to learn theoretical and practical aspects, plus the procedures involved in controlling quality production.

They grow in understanding of problem-solving techniques by being able to observe the techniques by which raw products become manufactured goods.

Would you share your time or contacts to assist in developing a means of offering these experiences to the students?

The following are examples of the areas that students have expressed a desire to know, or areas that would be challenging. This is not a complete list—you may add other areas of potential interest.

Please circle contact resources you offer.

Let's pool resources to give our children maximum opportunities!

Industries:	Sugar, fish and seafood industry, shipping, sulphur, clothing, manufacturing
Science:	Chemistry: oil, agricultural research Physics: electricity, electronics, telephone, photography, mechanical devices, construction (architecture, boat making, shop work), radio, printing Mathematics: computers Earth: Minerology, hydrology, paleontology, archaeology, levee system, water system Medical
Nature:	Agriculture: animal husbandry, zoology, food processing, botony, birds, fish, water life, collections of bugs, butterflys
Social Science:	Humanities: social awareness Government: legislature, administration, judiciary; history—museums, landmarks; psychology, sociology, international relations—foreign officials and students
Fine Arts:	Music, art, dancing, dramatics (creative, children's theatre) television and radio, private collections and galleries
Physical Development:	Creative games
Linguistics	
Other:	

I would be willing to help develop resources in the above circled area or areas.

Name_____
(Please Print)

Telephone: Address_____

_____ City_____ Zip_____

Exhibit VI: Application for Membership in Parent Organization

COUNT ME IN!

I would like to join the Association For Gifted And Talented Students in Louisiana to:

HELP DEVELOP
OUR GREATEST NATURAL RESOURCE

Attached are my dues for one year in the amount of $5.00

☐ Cash ☐ Check ☐ Other

I am _____ Parent

_____ Teacher

_____ Interested Citizen

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____

Mail to:

Association For Gifted And Talented Students in Louisiana
1627 Frankfort Street
New Orleans, Louisiana 70122

Exhibit VII: Suggested Permanent Committees For Parent Organization

The following are for permanent standing committees. Of course, the committees recommended in the section covering temporary organization in Chapter IV (except Bylaws Committee) are still basic to the organizational functioning, but should be supplemented as the organization grows. Choose committees and areas of action that best fit the organization goals and membership talents. ***Each one of these committee efforts can contribute to the benefit of gifted and talented students.*** The more committees functioning means more advantages for the gifted and talented children—and more members ***committed*** to your association.

Budget Committee

This committee should be responsible for planning the financial program of the organization.

Income might be expected from dues, mini-courses, foundations or other sources. Planned expenditures would include paper, envelopes, stamps, corporate charges, conferences, travel, telephone charges, and any other costs of projects undertaken by the organization.

Both the Treasurer and Finance Committee Chairperson should be members of the committee.

Bulletin Committee

The Bulletin Committee should be responsible for developing and sending out notices of meetings and/or reproducing and mailing any other special information (such as newsletter).

Federal Funding Committee

This committee should be chaired by someone who is in a position to have access to information regarding the many funding agencies and regulations and who would keep in mind gifted students and the organization as policies develop nationally.

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee should be responsible for seeking funds to meet the organizational needs if income from dues and projects was not adequate.

Hospitality Committee

The Hospitality Committee should be responsible for creating a spirit of friendliness within the group.

Having greeters on hand early as people come to the meeting, manning a registration table to obtain names and addresses of those in attendance, and having available coffee and/or other simple refreshments are all helpful to obtain interaction and a "togetherness" of those in attendance.

Library Committee

A Library Committee should have the responsibility to work with the public libraries of the area to encourage them to make available books and resources for the gifted as well as books for parents and educators to understand the role they play in maximum development of gifted and talented youth.

Additionally, posters and notices regarding meetings and other activities for the gifted and talented could be posted on the bulletin boards to further community understanding.

This committee could be responsible to produce a library resource booklet regarding information available.

Membership Committee

The membership Committee should plan and conduct a membership drive each year with the help of the Publicity Committee.

Either the chairperson or a member of the Membership Committee should be available to accept membership and dues at each meeting. Dues payments may be efficiently handled by having ready to distribute a short form indicating name, address, city zip code, telephone, and a place to indicate status as parent, educator, or other. (See Exhibit VI) A check could be attached to the form with information by the person joining and the process could be handled quickly. A receipt with duplicate retained should be given to a person offering cash for dues.

The Treasurer could assist in the enrolling procedures, but the Membership Committee should retain a current list of membership with date of dues payment and monies going to the Treasurer for deposit.

A questionnaire should be distributed as a vehicle for members to volunteer to serve on various committees. (See Exhibit IV for adaptation to local needs.) Maximum effort should be made to ***involve***—put to work—interested persons.

A "Desired Community Resources" questionnaire should be given to persons in attendance in order that they may have the opportunity to offer talents and contacts to furnish learning experiences to the gifted and talented. (See Exhibit V) Coordinate the distribution with the Resources and Research Committee.

The Membership Committee is in a position to make a particularly strong contribution to the total functioning of the organization.

Mini-Course Committee

The Mini-Course Committee is one which can bring to the gifted and talented students a wide range of delightful experiences and challenges. A group of dedicated members can enrich the lives of these students by helping the community become involved with them.

The following directions are a step-by-step approach and may assist in assuring a coverage of major points in planning.

1. Survey parents ***and*** children to determine interests, ages, and abilities of the children who will be enrolling in the courses.
2. Survey community talent.
   a. Poll parent members to discover their educational background, college majors, hobbies, collections, special training and interests for potential contributions.
   b. Poll higher educational institutions. Sometimes there is an office of continuing education which sponsors non-credit courses for the community. The director can be of help in establishing courses or referring you to interested personnel.
   c. Contact directors of cultural centers such as museums, art galleries, symphony orchestras, little theater groups, as well as individual musicians, dancers, actors, and artists. These people may also prove helpful in establishing apprenticeship programs where gifted and talented children can work with professionals.

d. Establish liaisons with professionals, craftsmen, and skilled tradesmen to either serve as instructors or to serve in the apprenticeship program.

e. Contact directors of parks and recreational facilities, research institutes, plants and factories, and governmental agencies to determine if there are interested people willing to work with gifted children.

3. Based on interests surveys, establish three or four mini-courses initially. As the chairperson and assistants become more experienced, additional courses may be added.

   a. The standard fee paid for instructors holding a master's degree is $7.00 per hour. Whenever possible, appeal to qualified individuals to donate their time, thus minimizing the cost to the child, and allowing funds to support the organization.

   b. Have the instructor fill out a form stating his or her educational background, qualifications, course outline and objectives, number of sessions, duration of the course, time and day of the week, location, number of students who can be accommodated, ages or educational levels, and materials needed.

   c. Public schools and universities will frequently make space available for such programs. However a check should be made to determine if special insurance is necessary to cover any association risk.

   d. Have a parent volunteer aide to be available for each course to supervise the students and to act as a liaison person between the instructor and the association. The aide should be on the scene about 15 minutes before the class starts and about 15 minutes after it finishes, or until all students have been released to their parents. No child should be left without an adult chaperone.

   e. Only children of members of the association should be allowed to enroll. Of course, parents could pay membership dues as they enroll their child.

   f. Set a registration fee to cover the anticipated cost of the course based on a minimum number to be enrolled in the class.

4. Publicize the courses in advance by means of newsletters to parents, principals, and teachers servicing gifted and talented children, and schools where gifted and talented students attend. Articles in newspapers as well as posters in libraries and shopping centers, may prove helpful.

5. Some suggestions for possible mini-courses are: (also see Exhibits II and III.)

Creative Dramatics	**Film making**	**Woodworking**	**Chemistry**
Music Appreciation	**Geology**	**Typing**	**Aerodynamics**
Foreign Languages	**Photography**	**Printmaking**	**Zoology**
Creative Dance	**Ceramics**	**Debate**	**Painting**
Animal Behavior	**Psychology**	**Mathematics**	**Sculpture**
Nature Study	**Ecology**	**Astronomy**	**Rocketry**
Speed Reading	**Human Body**	**Archaeology**	**Electronics**

6. Try to offer at least one course for each of the following age groups: pre-school, primary, intermediate, middle school, high school.

7. Be sure that the content in the course is specifically designed to challenge the gifted and talented student. It should allow the student to pursue the particular area in depth.

8. The Mini-Course Committee can perform a very valuable service to all students who participate and is an asset to the organization.

Newsletter Committee

A newsletter is an excellent means of communicating with the members to keep them informed of developments in the area of gifted and talented education. This could bring to their attention happenings throughout the state and nation, research, and resources that would be of interest as well as local plans and activities. It helps members who do not attend all meetings to maintain a continuing interest.

Office Services Committee

An active organization has many jobs to be done which we may call "in-house" and which may utilize the talents and develop the interest and involvement of members.

Regular jobs such as addressing envelopes, typing, stencil cutting, collating material, assisting in mail-outs, using a mimeograph machine or making available offset printing are very valuable to a smooth running chapter and offer opportunities for numerous interested people to participate in the total effort..

These jobs can be included in the Bulletin Committee responsibilities or kept separate. However, it is important to locate people who are able to assist in these areas and share responsibility.

Public Affairs Committee

The Public Affairs Committee should have the responsibility of becoming knowledgeable about what the schools are doing or can do for gifted and talented students within the laws and policy and through the use of local, state and federal funds. Members should discuss the potential development of gifted and talented students with all officials involved in their education. They should inform the members and community of their findings.

Publicity Committee

The Publicity Committee would be responsible for developing a positive image of both the organization and its work, and the gifted and talented students and their needs.

All of the news media of the community, including major newspapers, neighborhood newspapers, radio and television are generally quite interested in the activities of a group with these goals and activities.

Announcements of regular meetings with topics to be discussed and activities of the organization should be well publicized. Additionally, general feature articles are well received.

This committee needs especially dedicated workers. Community support is dependent on how much the word gets around regarding the needs of these special children.

Program Committee

The Program Committee would be responsible for presentations or special events at meetings. These programs should be planned to develop the understanding of the members in all facets of the objectives of your association. They should recognize the needs of the membership in understanding the factors in home, school and community which affect the lives of gifted and talented children and present reliable information to meet these needs.

The committee should consist of parents, educators and community leaders and be a cross-section of the organization. The committee should be aware of the relevant resources of the community, both people and materials.

Specific topics of interest might be:

1. Characteristics of gifted and talented students.
2. How gifted and talented students are identified.
3. What parents can do to help children in their development.
4. How is education for gifted different from that in regular class?
5. How may programming for the gifted and talented be accomplished.
6. Explain Bloom's Taxonomy and Guilford's Structure of the Intellect.
7. Who is responsible for education of gifted and talented students?
8. What funding is available for gifted and talented students?
9. What programs in the state and nation are available for gifted and talented students?
10. What are the state laws and state and local administrative policies regarding education for gifted and talented students?

Resources

Resources available for programs might include:

1. The local school board members, superintendent, supervisor of curriculum, supervisor of special education, finance officer, or teachers who are particularly adept in working with the students.
2. Spokesmen from nearby universities, from their education department, special education testing center, or arts and science departments.
3. The State Coordinator for Gifted and Talented in the State Department of Education as a speaker or offering advice on resources.
4. Two or three members to read portions of several authoritive books or monographs on a particular subject area, such as those listed above, report as a panel on the thinking of those authors (not their own thinking), and then have open discussion on the information.

Resource and Research Committee

The Resource and Research Committee would have the responsibility of searching out resources which might be available for gifted students and of coordinating all expertise in the community that would be "on call" to assist a gifted student or group of them. It is gratifying when you realize the number of people in a community who are willing to give these students a helping hand when their particular field of expertise is needed.

A "Desired Community Resources" checklist, (See Exhibit V) includes items of interest which would enrich the background of gifted students. A checklist (adapted to your community) could give the members an opportunity to offer contacts to obtain services for these students.

Sub-committee chairpersons with committees could be given responsibility for finding resources of various categories to obtain maximum use of "help power" in the community. Additionally, this would give members active roles in the organization.

Some resources could be utilized for mini-courses: a series of regular meetings with a group of students of a particular level.

Other resources could be made available to students (one or a few) who have a particular interest or need of guidance or understanding in an area of knowledge which could be offered by a person in the community. The committee chairperson or designated committee member could arrange a meeting of the student with the resource person at a time and place mutually convenient to them. This service might also be made available on call to students through the counselors at school.

Scholarships and Awards Committee

1. This committee should accumulate information regarding national, state, and local scholarships and opportunities offered to the gifted

by universities, public agencies, private foundations and organizations. They should notify parents, students, and school personnel at meetings and through bulletins and should serve as a continuing resource for such information. The knowledge of how, when, and where to apply for opportunities is a major key for enabling a student to participate.

2. This committee should encourage awards and recognition of gifted students when special achievements are made. These students need encouragement just as do football and basketball players.

3. This committee should make efforts to develop school, community and business support of awards, scholarships and opportunities.

Telephone Committee

The Telephone Committee can be a vital link in communication, adding a personal touch to communication with members and being a grassroots link from the members to the Board as to what the real needs and desires of the members are.

Callers can explain any special projects and solicit helpers for special needs. And, finally, because so much goes on in our society, organizations are increasingly discovering the need for members to be reminded of meetings.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 states:

"No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, or denied the benefit of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance."

Therefore, EPDA programs must be operated in compliance with this law.